The Ninth Pawn of White

A BOOK OF UNWRITTEN VERSES

VIJAY FAFAT

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Author Contact:
Email: vijayfafat@gmail.com
Website: www.vijayfafat.wordpress.com
Amazon: www.amazon.com/author/vijayfafat

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We are all names
penciled in a forgotten book...
...waiting...
waiting to jump out of the pages...

Foreword

The inimitable Borges had his internal anguish writ large in *Matthew XXV: 30 :*

> *"In vain have oceans been squandered on you,*
> *in vain the sun, wonderfully seen through Whitman's eyes.*
> *You have used up the years and they have used up you,*
> *and still, and still, you have not written the poem"* [1]

We all hear this inner urging at some stage in life. Away from our vocational responsibilities, removed from the quotidian worries and preoccupation, we all strive to write our literal or metaphorical poems in our own ways, following our own passions. The search for meaning keeps enticing us even when the plebeian life supplies us with all which we outwardly seek. In this, we are the musk deer which cannot fathom the secret of the heavenly fragrance perpetually shrouding it, and hunts for its source ceaselessly in all six directions, not knowing that the unwrapping of the riddle lies close to its heart, within its belly; a secret which shadows it literally and lets it not rest in peace.

To unravel our cryptogram, we must pick up the thread somewhere, since:

> *The End tugs at The Beginning:*
> "Start! For I must find my expression!"

Almost afraid of having Borges' Infinite Voice catching up with its finger-wagging admonishment, and in an effort to hold it at bay, here then is my first effort at gathering up the oceans which have been squandered on me by a generous world...

---

[1] From *"Jorge Luis Borges - Selected Poems",* edited by Alexander Coleman

Chess is a game of few rules but infinite flight of fancy. Mathematically precise, but given to unpredictably rich patterns of evolution, it has an air of unwinding mystery and apocalyptic secrets. One can find expressions of daily life as well as metaphorical representations of human foibles in the decisions and movements of its rooks, its queens, its bishops, its pawns. Their diagonal movements, mischievous sparring, lurking attacks, inscrutable plans and intransigent blockades are representations of our recurring histories and complex futures. They are models of our cunning and naïveté, our planned vision and myopic blind spots, all in one microcosmic arcade of 64 squares.

Not satisfied with the cornucopia offered by the 8-by-8 planar board of black and white, restless minds have explored chess in 3-D, on spherical and toroidal surfaces, on hexagonal and circular boards, in multi-player settings, rapid-fire formats, blind-folded demonstrations, and with such fancy variations as *"Alice Boards"* and *"Atomic Chess"*.

The ninth pawn of white (or black, for that matter) is a figurative variation on this theme. It is not allowed in the rules of standard chess. It remains non-existent; a fantasy; a breaking of the rules in its appearance. Perhaps it is a desire of the "white" side - *"oh! for the want of one more pawn!"*. Or it may be an iota of disagreement we inflate into a long-exhausted argument. The ninth pawn is versatile in its hovering potentiality.

The ninth pawn is also philosophical, living only at the corner of the eye as a minor startling occurrence when first conjured. It is of no consequence in the evolution of the actual game, but as other minor desires of life, it remains a snagging in the back of our minds. There are times we wish the ninth pawn existed "on our side"; there are times it seems the "other side" has unfairly inherited an army of ninth pawns. It is a matter of narrow perspectives.

The verses in this collection are similar. They are simple drops of incipient thought; incomplete emotions looking for their outlets. By themselves, they are of limited consequence, like the ninth pawn, and left to their devices, they might well

merge back, un-composed, in the infinite book of unwritten verses. Their flight cannot materialize without the reader's indulgence, and her own interpretations in metaphor of the inspired thought. They are meant to trigger introspection, images, stories, and analytic extensions of what may or may not have been implied. If they fail in that process - *which many surely will* - it is the failure of the craft, not the art, nor the reader.

Some verses are straight shots, delivering final conclusions, but most of them are open to a variety of conclusions in a participative mood. E.g.

"Must you open the box of Pandora
just to prove you have found the key?"

is not just the sorrow of the genie let out of the atom, but a question of everyday life: must we always serve up information in the service of probity or truth if the impact is more deleterious than the accrued gain? As another verse says,

"Sometimes it is better never than late..."

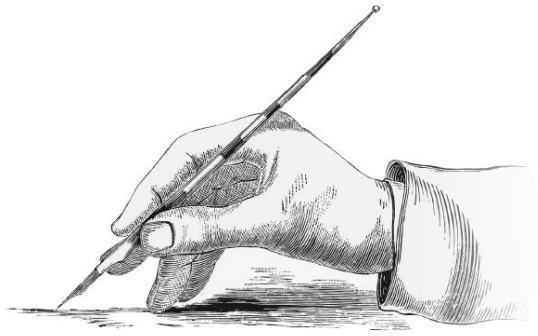
I have outlined my sole excuse to inflict the collection on you, though the infernal Borgesian voice does not shy from its opposite reprimand:

"Must we be slaves to this...
...this moment of vanity imposed by others?..."

Apologies for all the myriad places where a word may be askew or the thought fairly trivial. Any sparkle of imagination is in your eyes, any chaff remains a shortcoming of mine.

This book will be consigned to future dust, but perhaps it can leave a verse or two to alight in your memory at a random moment on a quiet afternoon as the magical appearance of your own ninth pawn of white...

Vijay Fafat
Singapore
20 Oct 2017



Led

He and his fate walk together,
Master and Slave.
In which order,
only time and action tell.

Residue

As the tide of life recedes,
and the crest of foam scatters to the wind,
all that's left on the sand
are dying bubbles of dreams and wishes...

With Cold Water...

She douses the flames of desire in my eyes,
and asks why I leave the soiree so thirsty.

It Giveth Only

Do not dispute your thirst of water…
…not with the flowing brook.

Interrogative

Asks, he does…
But Oh!
A question so small…

Newton, of course, asked a seemingly small question, *"Why does the apple fall toward the ground?"*, and from that grew the Universal Law of Gravitation as well as the need to invent Calculus. Most of our questions, alas, don't have such fecundity…

In Lieu Of...

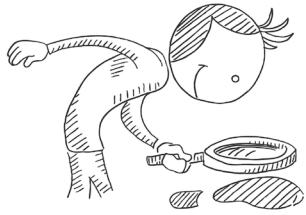
One cannot become a pundit by proxy.

Quenchless

No completeness in the world,
but endless desires...

Take Hold

Let not fate tarry on you.
Seize it before it carries you.

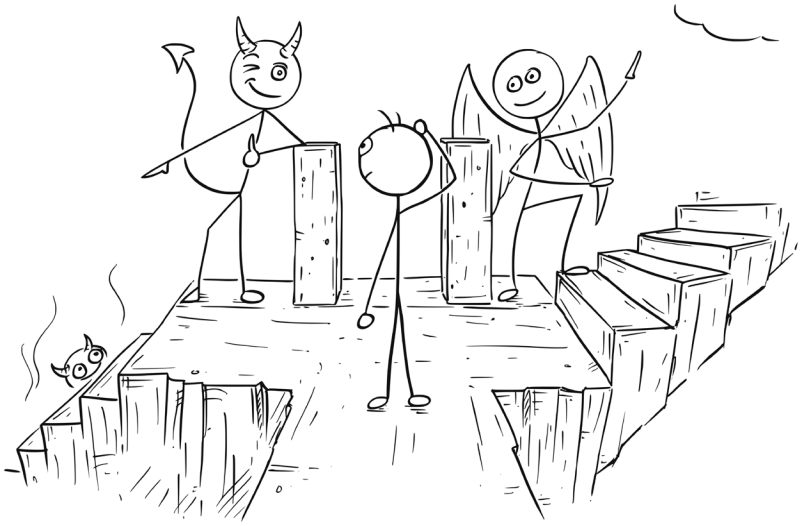


Chart!

Never mourn the loss of a map.
There remains a world to discover.

Necessary Vices

Life needs
an essential bargain
of what were once
sacrosanct principles...



Residual

We do not mourn the memories lost.
We mourn the ones
which beset us as loyal friends.

Fast Bait

Trust not the promises of haste.
They curl up as little lies...

Check-Mate

The pain of seven continents
weighs on His carefree soul
as God ponders His next move.

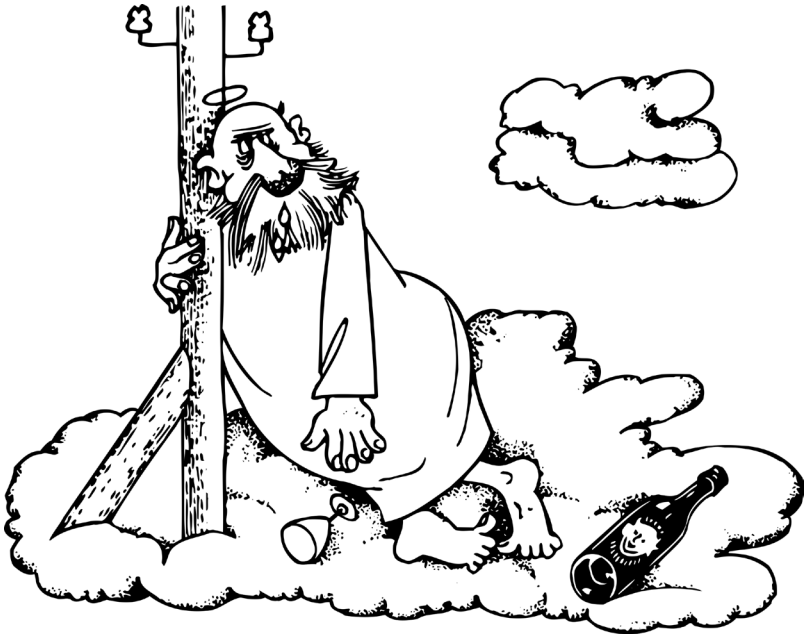
Overlooked

Something was said then, I recall,
to move the still spirit.

If only!
Oh, if only I had heard!
The broken silence
amidst the meaningless mumblings of my mind.

Through A Lens, Darkly

Right beneath this shimmering...
this glittering surface of water
lies
a distorted view of the world above.



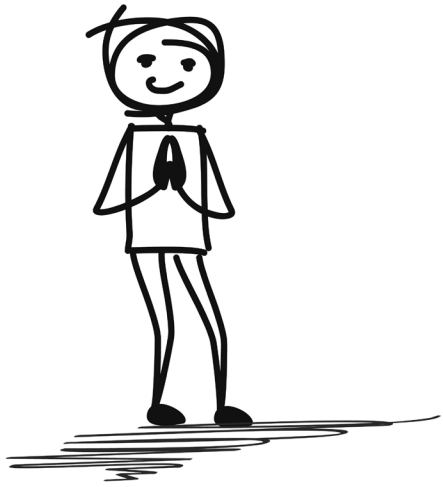
Senseless...

A charlatan walked as a prophet,
and changed the world of sheep in his wake,
and all that while,
God watched
with blind eyes,
helpless…

Janus

Oh, the blinding Simplicity
of Duplicity…

In Roman mythology, Janus ("Jay-n-us"); was the god of war and peace, beginnings and endings, gateways, and other such dual-edged concepts. He is generally depicted with two faces looking in opposite directions, which is why a person who is insincere or speaks from both sides of his mouth is called "Janus-faced". The month of January is named after him.

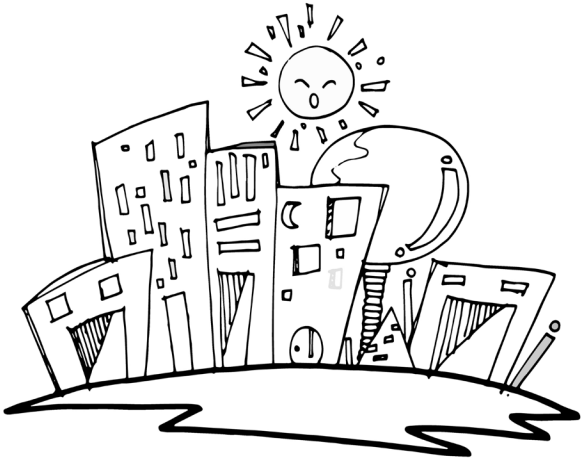


Advice

The best defense against sarcasm
is to take it literally.

Pusillanimity

Such small doors in such tall houses!
Do Men live here or Pygmies?



Receiver

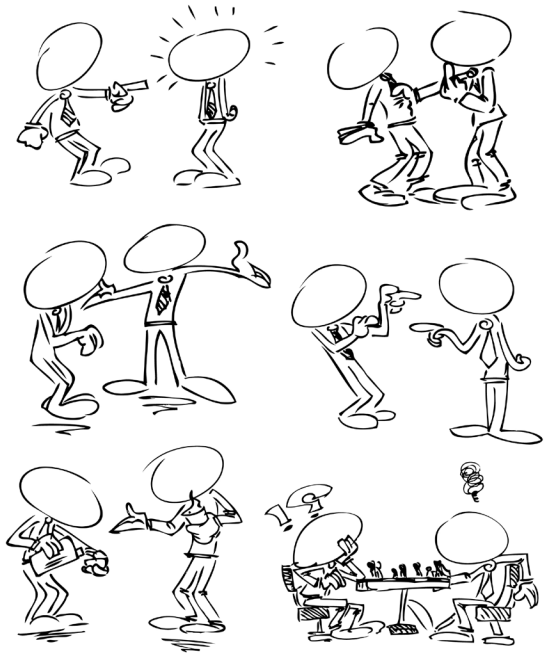
Speech discriminates between listening ears
even if sound does not.

Where There's One..

We are slaves
to the diktats of free will...

Left Behind

The Past does not forget.
Men do.



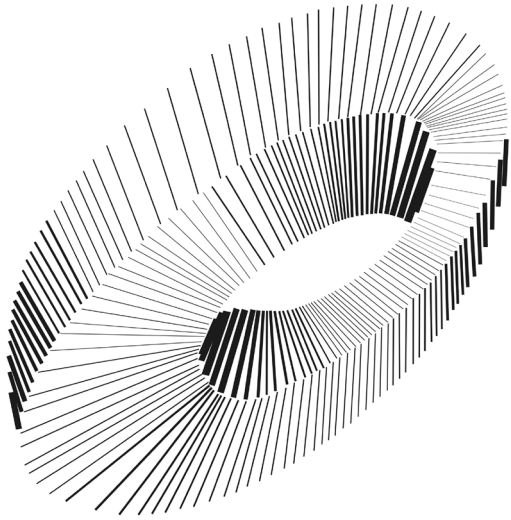
Curse

Dawn to dusk, lust to dust,
such is our lot;
we strive for completeness
of the Irrelevant Thought.

The Pyrrhic War (280 BC - 275 BC) comprised a series of battles between the armies of the Roman Republic and King Pyrrhus of Epirus. Pyrrhus eked out some victories in the initial battles, but at a very heavy cost. On top of it, given the limitations of resources and smaller population of Epirus, replenishing these losses was not easy. So much was the sense of doom even in victory that after his second success in the war, Pyrrhus lugubriously proclaimed, *"If we are victorious in one more battle with the Romans, we will be ruined!"*. That is the etymology of the phrase, *"a Pyrrhic victory"*, which signifies a battle or argument which has been won at too great a cost. By the end of 275 BC, Pyrrhus had given up on the war, and 3 years later, the Roman victory against him was complete.

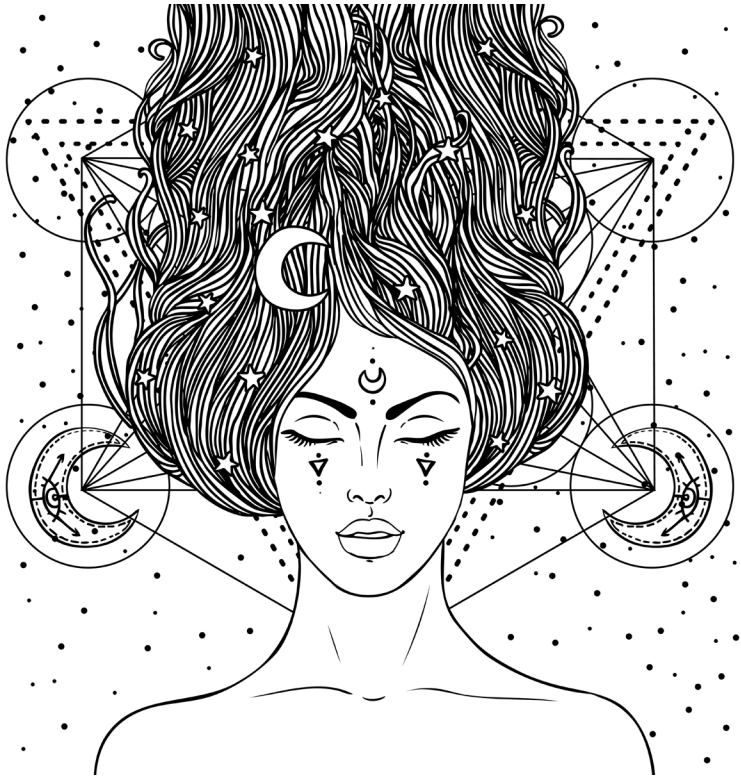
The Bugle's Lesson

Listen carefully
to that resonant sound from history;
the embittered, shuffling march
of the troops of Pyrrhus.



Economy

The brevity of oxymoronic thought...
Such profligacy of parsimony!



Parochial

Ahh, such loss!
Such mortal desires
in the face of immortal offerings!

Sketch It

Draw a gentle sea.
Draw an easy boat.
And row out yonder.
Alone.
Against the rising dawn.
To unknown bliss.

Esteem

Thank the imperfections around you,
elevating you in your own eyes.

Nameless

Like a whisper it pervades;
like a perfume it swirls;
even when ‘tis just
a memory arrived unbidden...

Pose

A hand raised to strike cannot bless.

Om Mani Padme Hum

"Om Mani Padme Hum" is a Sanskrit mantra from Buddhist philosophy. It represents a deep thought that the quality of compassion is the light of your being, a lotus-jewel of your soul.

Clarity

Meandering words
lose their meaning along the way.

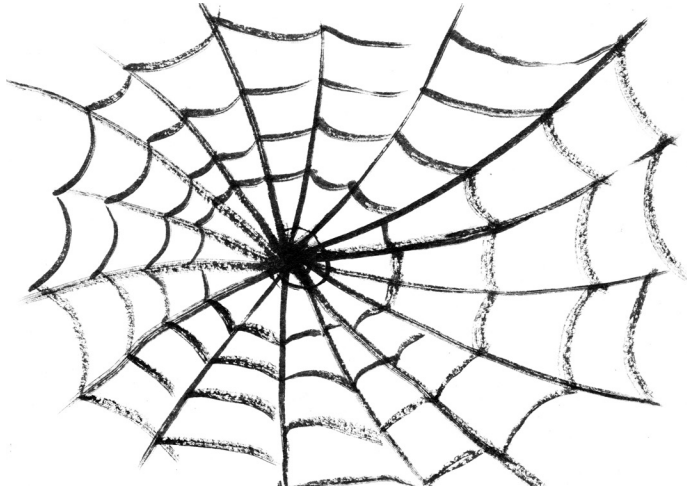
Evolve

From ashes to rose...
...Metamorphose...

Opponent

No cobweb ever stopped
a determined bull.

So it is with doubts,
and thus it is with the seeker...



Open Sky

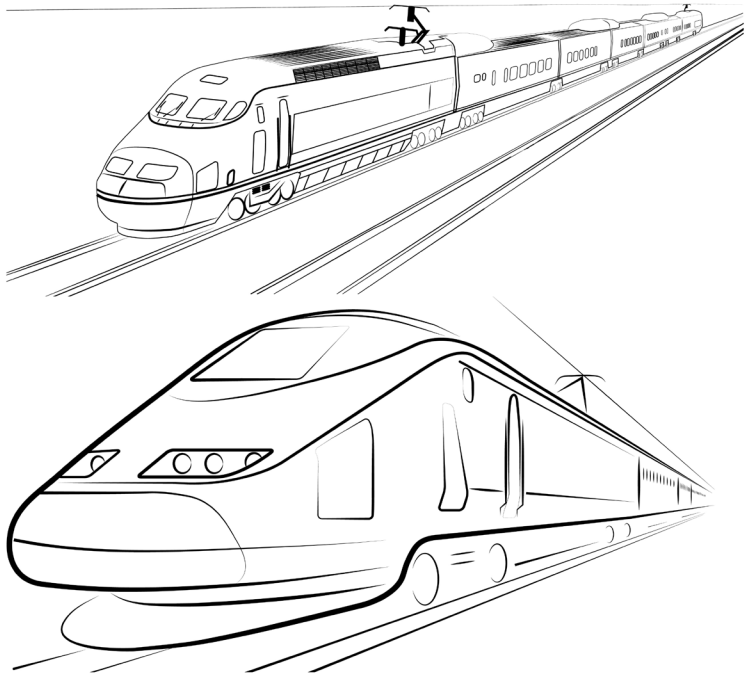
Take flight while you still can, little one.
Let not the torrent of naysaying
dampen your wings...

Control

Only a drunkard has a tongue
which moves of its own accord.

Conference

Must we depart
on these trains of thought
which did not find the station
of uncommon agreement?



Attraction

Locked in combat,
my stare with yours,
seeking that sign…

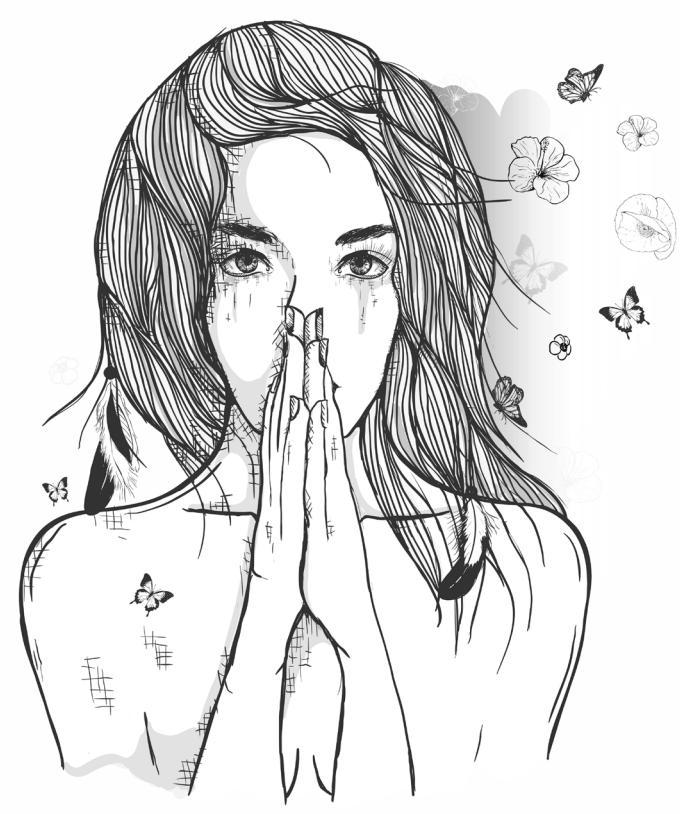
Tell me, Eyes,
if I'm worthy of your glance,
or your disinterested shrug...

Thoughtlets

Look, a block of words!
Or perhaps,
for the imagination,
a drop of thought...

Unwanted

Sorrow is the name of the heartless Spring
which leaves the cold winter inside...



Card-Game

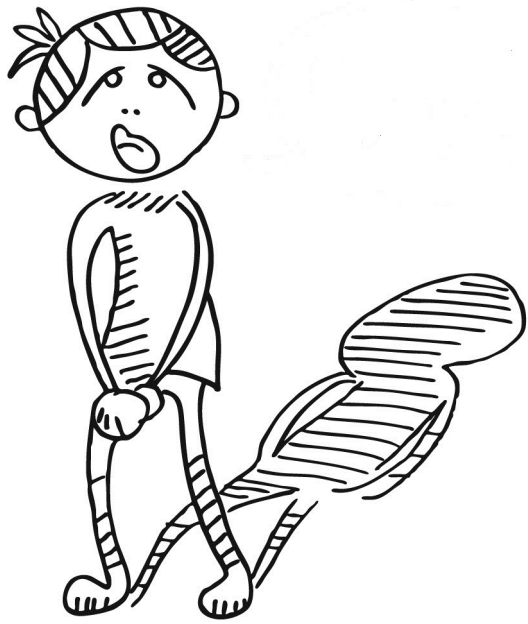
Are we not a game of Bluff played by life,
till we call in our deaths a show of hands?

Miasma

Ask not why the air is foul here;
herein dwells the greed
of the material world.

False

What manner of pride, that…
…that which raises the head
with supplicating eyes…?

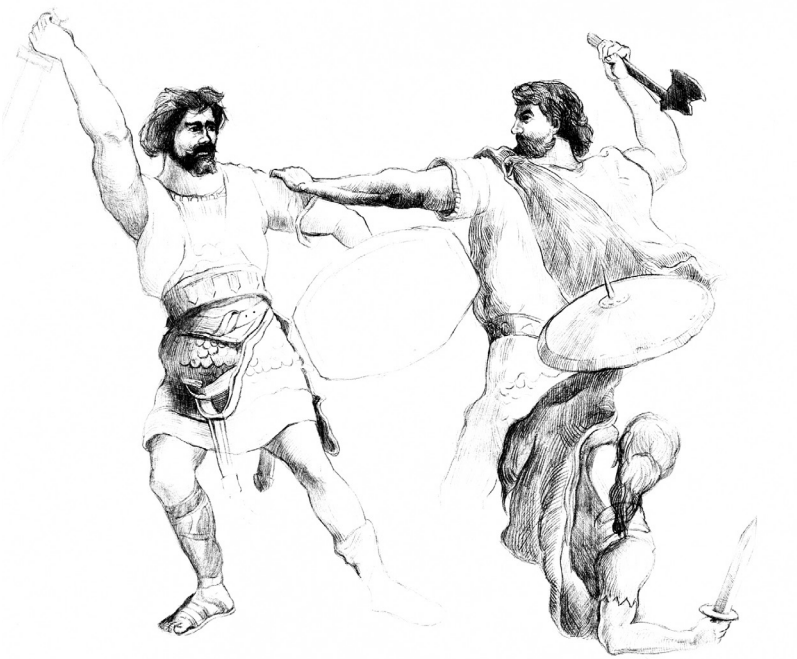


Secrets

The memory of first love,
alive in that hidden recess
that I visit every morn
of wistful thoughts
and rueful regrets…

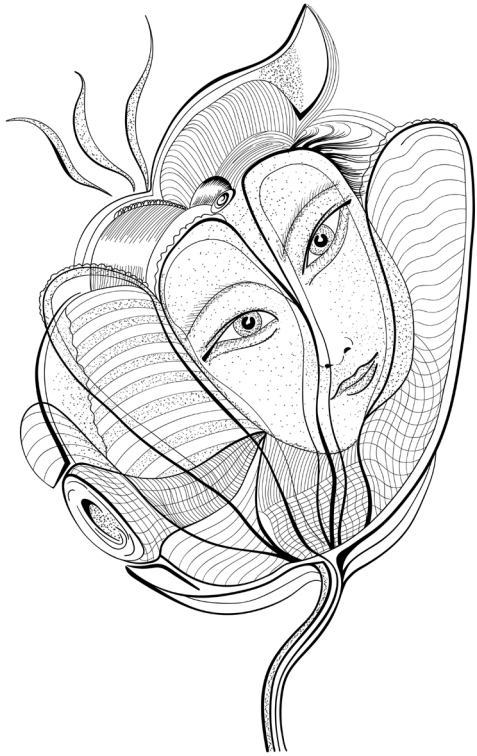
Beware Its Ferality

The baying wolves of vengeance
strain against their leashes,
testing the patience
of civil retribution.



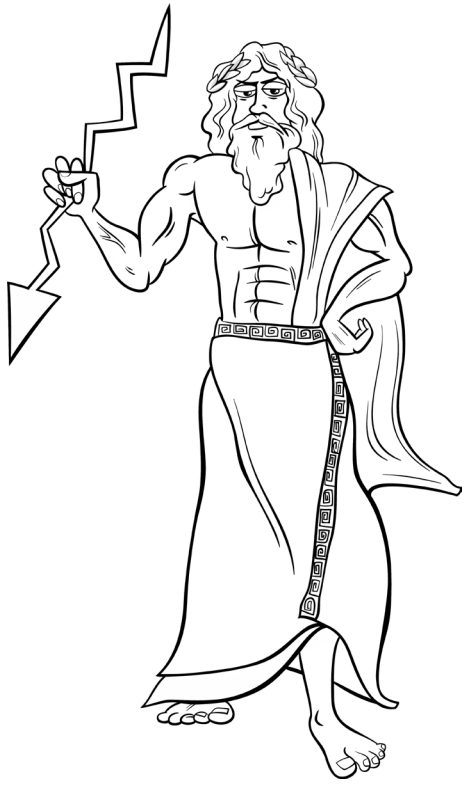
Sartorial Thought

Your conscience is the rough cloth
which covers the nudity of your mind.



Unknowing

The sprinkling of fragrant petals
hid the bed of thorns.
Therein lay their innocent sin...



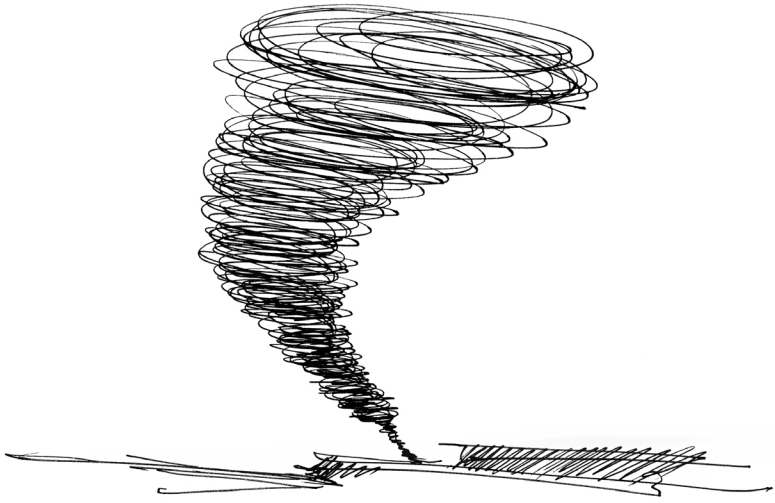
To Make It Worse...

When heroes make their last stand,
the gods watch.

At times,
the cruelest of them takes an interest…

Inflate

Is it not the case in our daily lives?
We pretend to see a hurricane
in a swirling mote's eye...



Who Asks?

The universe
is God's long-hand answer
to a hypothetical question...

Revision

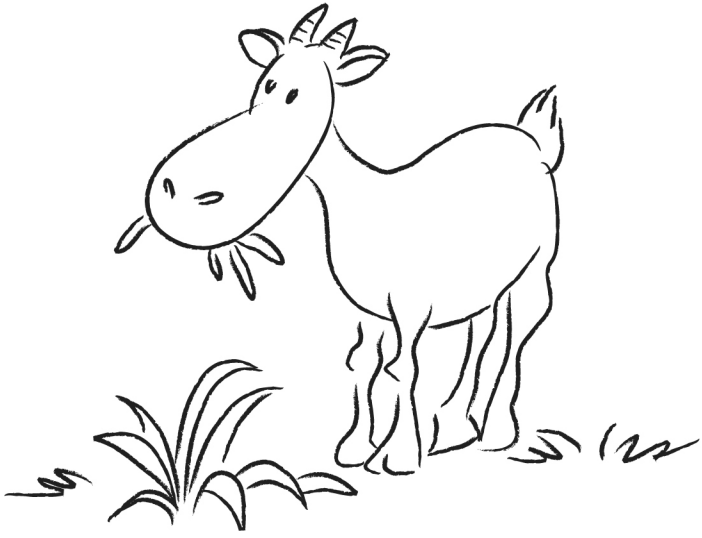
The ink of victory
rewrites history.

Ask Yourself

Is it for name you strive
Like an illegitimate off-spring?

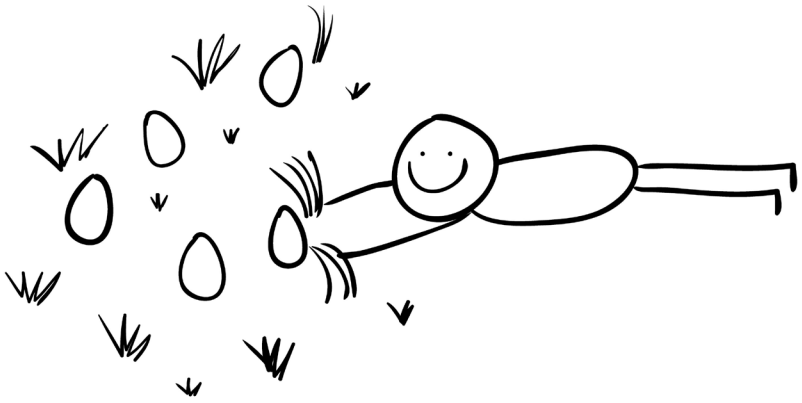
Care-Free

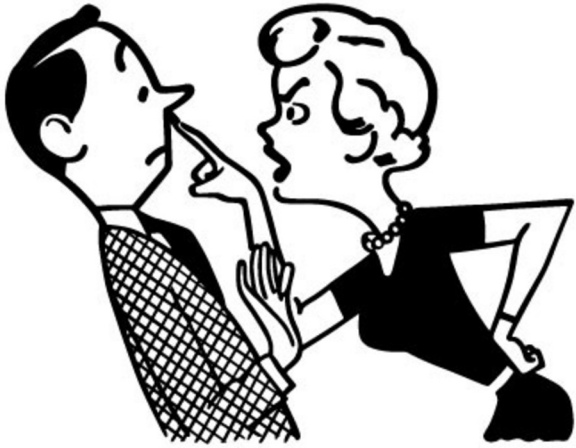
The blade of grass is insouciant
till it sees an approaching goat.



Work

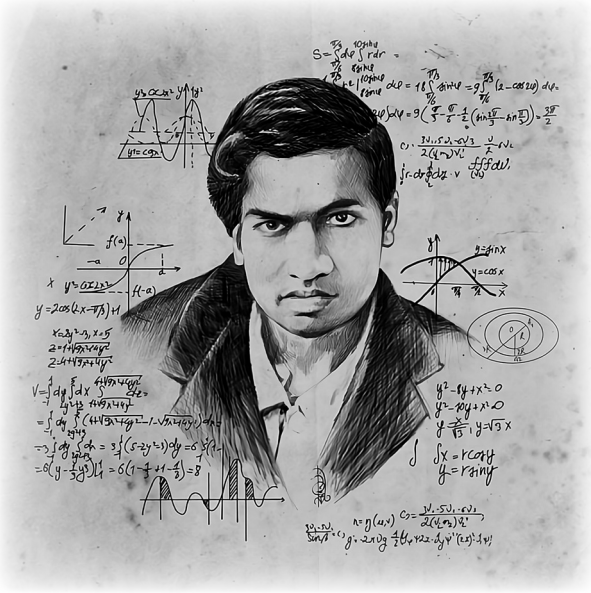
Stop peeling the skin
from grains of rice.
Do something worthwhile.





Give And Take

In any compromise,
the yield of the efforts accrue
only with an equal effort to yield.



Srinivas Ramanujan (1887-1920) was the most enigmatic mathematician in history, with seemingly magical capabilities of reeling off complex, unknown mathematics of Number Theory despite not having any formal training in mathematics. He could not fully explain all the esoteric formulae which sprung in his head as a cataract, and mathematicians have taken decades to unravel many of his pronouncements. As Ramanujan expressed, it was as if Goddess Namagiri was writing deeply intertwined mathematical knowledge directly on his tongue... His frequent quote was, *"An equation for me has no meaning unless it expresses a thought of God."*.

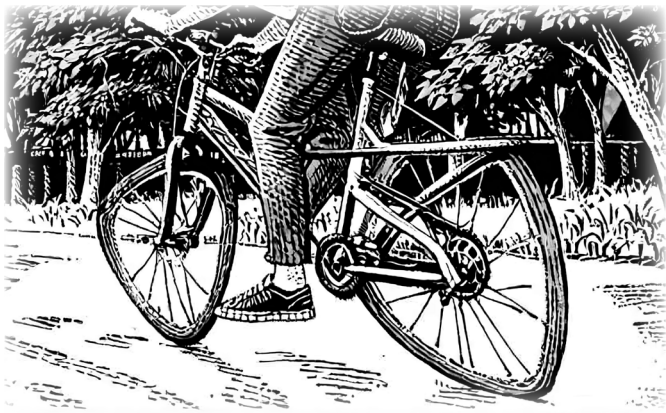
Brilliance

Lightning does not explain
nor announce its presence;
the rest of nature must simply take notice.

S. Ramanujan (1887-1920)

$$3 = \sqrt{1 + 2\sqrt{1 + 3\sqrt{1 + 4\sqrt{1 + \cdots}}}}$$

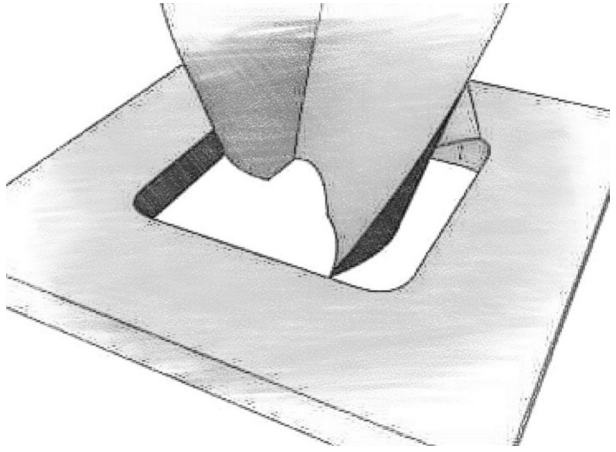
Proof: Define $f(x) = x + n + a$, so that $f(x)^2 = ax + (n + a)^2 + xf(x + n)$. Set $a = 0$, $n = 1$, $x = 2$ and substitute recursively for $f(x)$.



The problem of drilling a square hole using a rotatory mechanism is a tickling of the mind. What you need for that is an area of constant width just like a circle, but one which comes closest to the area of the desired square. Mathematicians long ago devised a triangle with curved sides ("Reuleux Triangle") which has many interesting properties and can do the job of drilling square holes extremely efficiently. Watching it in action is a visual treat. And one might easily guess that some funny bicyles can even have such triangular wheels offering a ride similar to the one with circular wheels... There are other surfaces of constant width, called "Reuleux Polygons", which can fulfill similar roles.

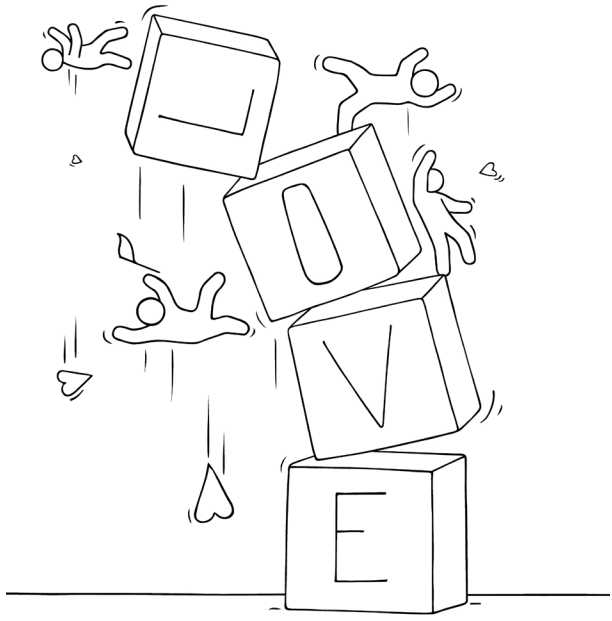
Thinkillate!

If you see a square hole,
think not of fitting a round peg in it;
ask how the square hole was drilled.



Command

Seek the voice inside,
which only says,
"Seek!"



First Hand

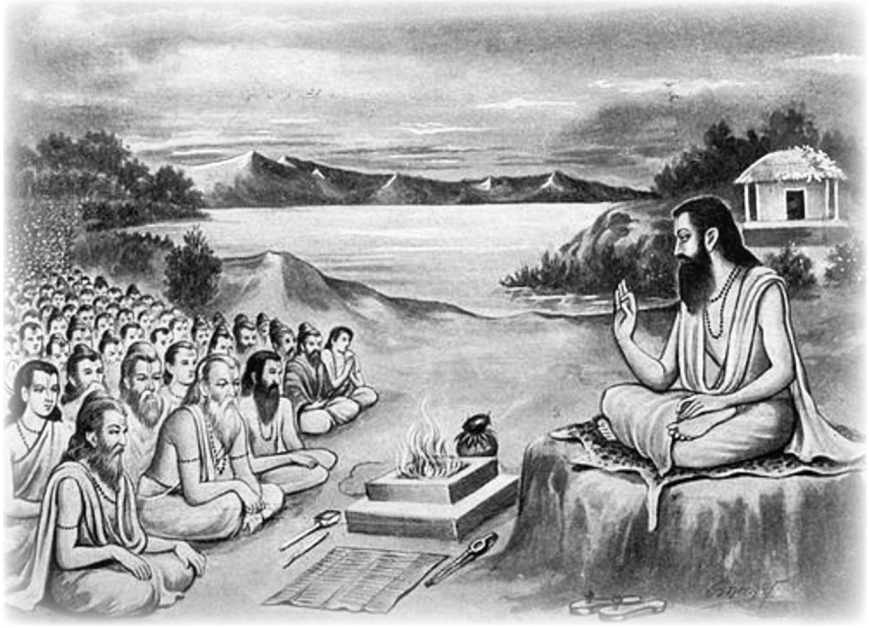
He appreciates the true worth of loyalty
who has seen betrayal in person...

Indulge

Grieve not the moment of excess
in a lifetime of moderation.

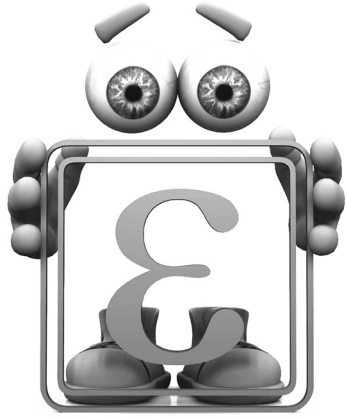
Lost World

Gone are the days
when stories of magical mythologies
made you feel safe with their promises.



Face Up!

Fate does not wait
on a man's wisdom to deal with it.
It is a bull to be taken by the horns,
lest it trample you to preordained dust.



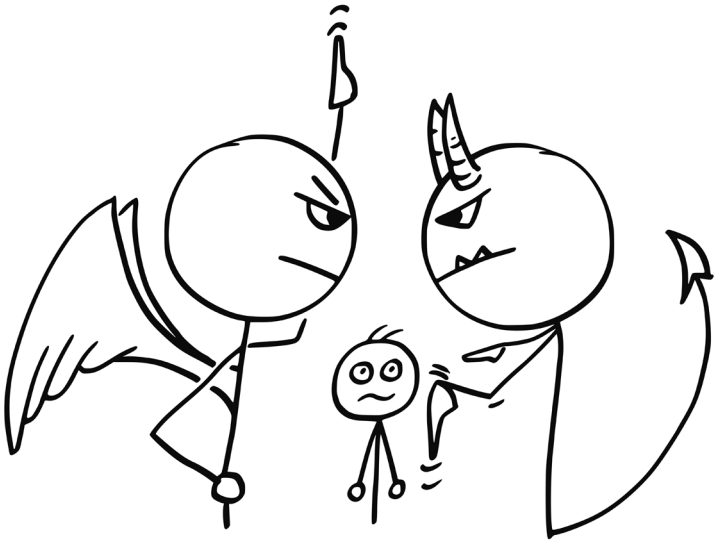
Epsilon

Do not frown at an approximation.
You need its friendship everyday.

Epsilon (Ɛ) is the fifth letter of the Greek alphabet. In mathematics, it is often used to represent a small, positive quantity which "balances" an equation - turns some approximate equality into an exact one. It effectively subsumes all the unknown effects, presumed to be "small", a carpet under which the mathematical ignorance is hidden.

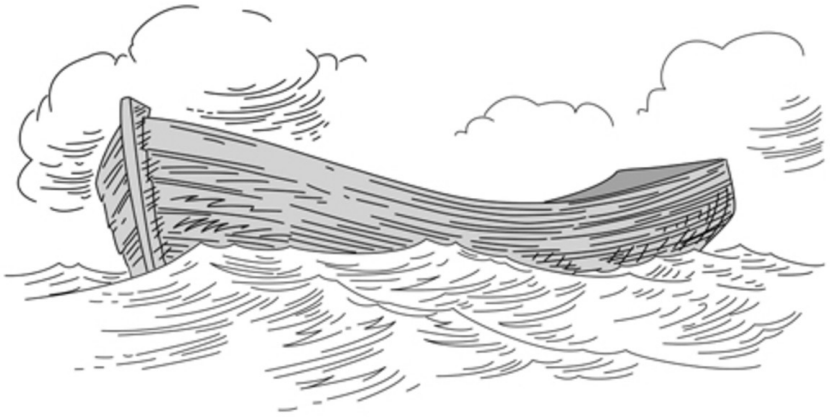
Armory

Choose your arms with prudence.
Weapons, without caution,
turn on you without loyalty...



Précarious

A man's character
is always poised on a slope;
a small nudge,
and gravity takes over.

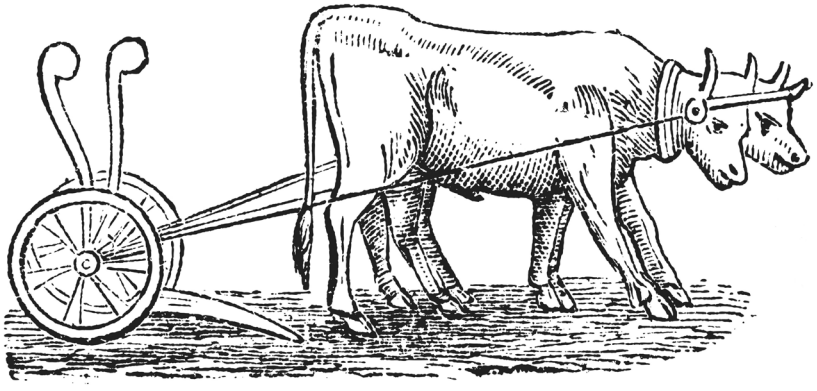


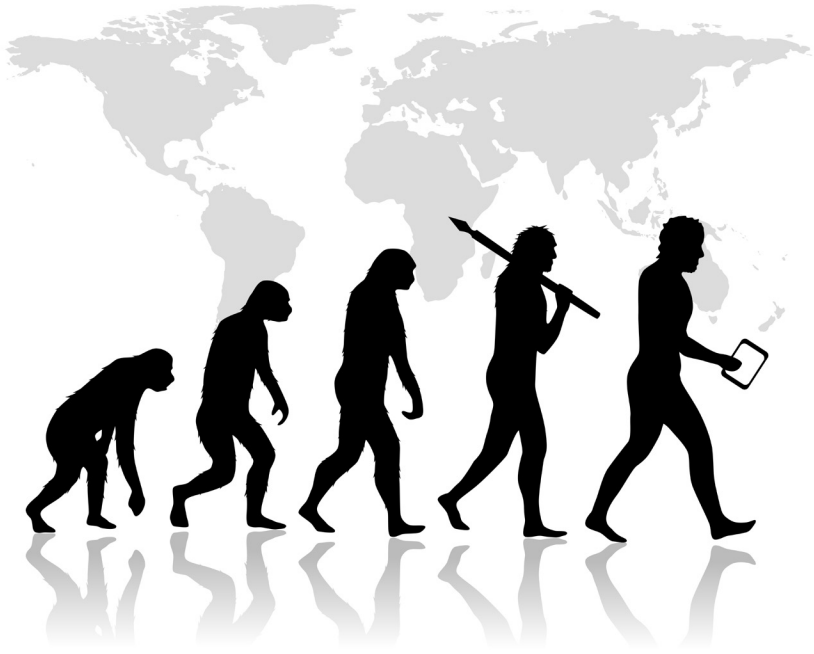
Viewpoint

A boat: Just a floating piece of wood.
A boat: Art and Ingenuity!

Guidance

One cannot leave the plough
to the bull's own devices.





Play It Well

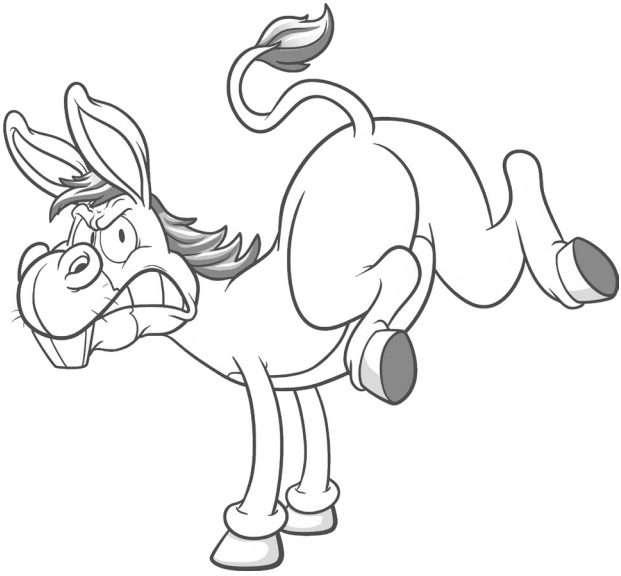
We have been written into history already.
All that remains is the unfolding of our acts.

Foundation

On easy sands
do principles shift.

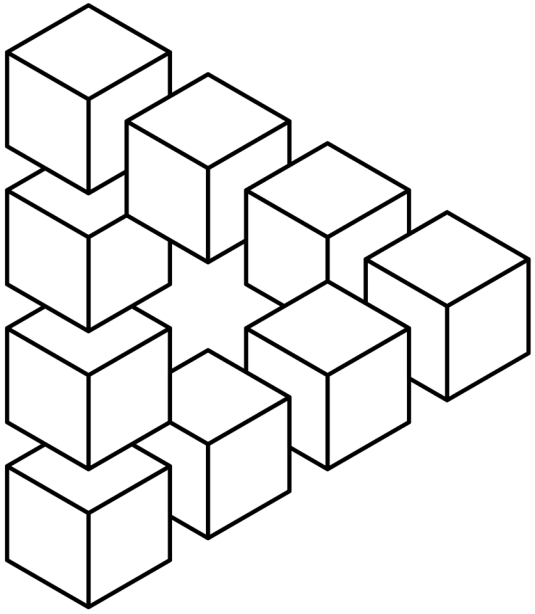
Enigma

Cheap are the words of the mystic;
or profound, maybe…



Arguments

To what avail,
this flaying of an old ass?
All you ever get
is its petulant braying
and a broken stick.



True

An inherent obfuscation
afflicts all difficult truths...

There Be Dragons

Mind the abyss
    between man and humanity;
there sits the dark psyche
    of the untamed mind...

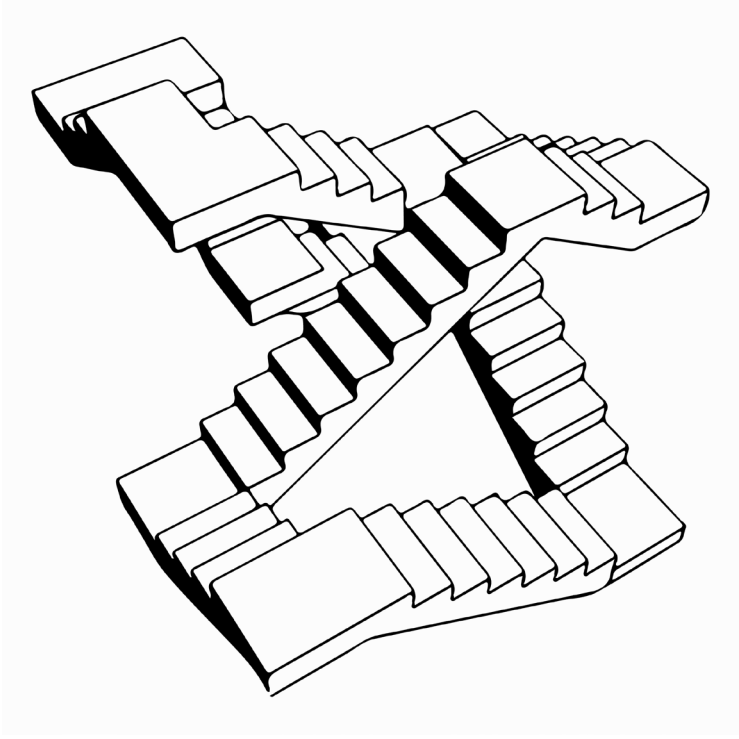
Out Of The Ordinary

Anyone can be enchanted by the magical.

True magic belongs
to those mesmerized by the mundane.

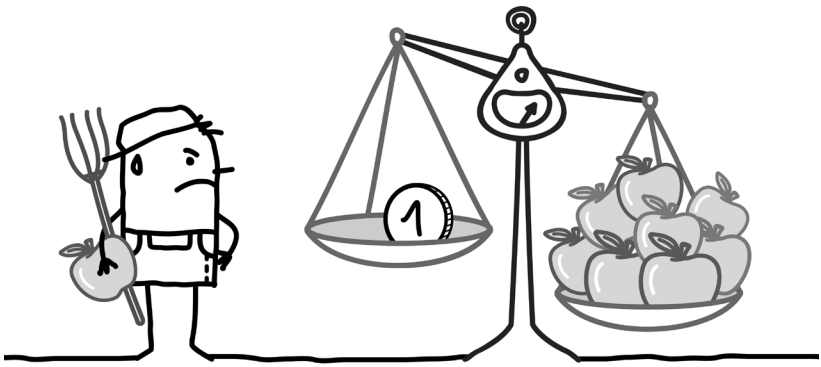
Directional

The staircase of virtue leads
both up and down...



Accept

There is no accounting
    of the iniquities in life.
There be only grief
    in maintaining their perpetual ledger.



Defy

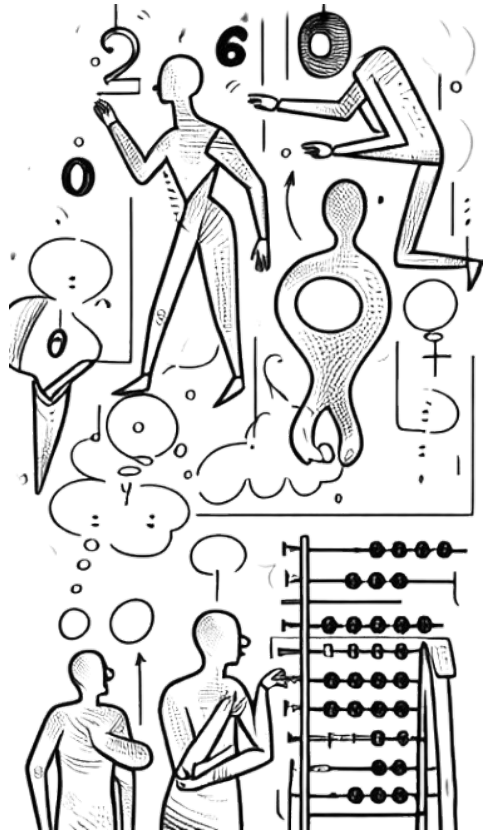
The pen which rebels
signs its symbols for the ages...

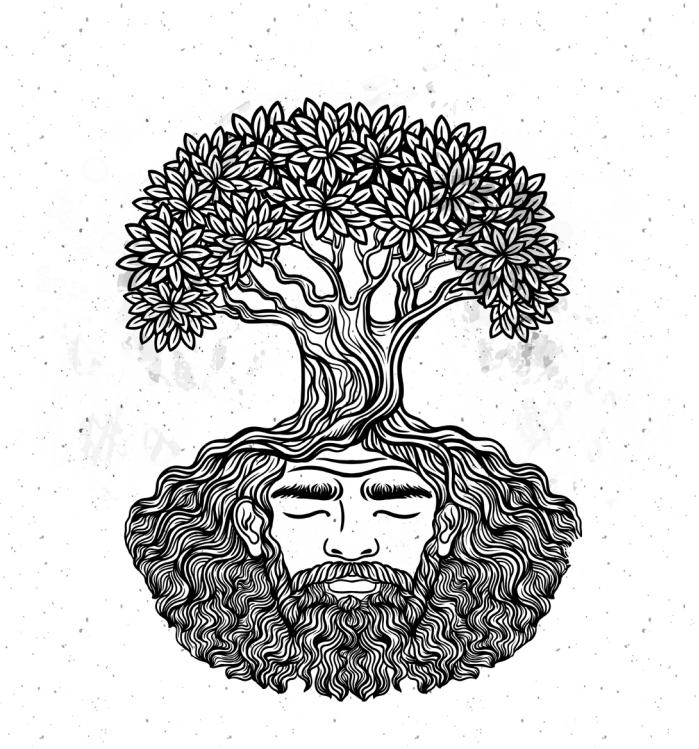
i

Rise above the existence
of a simple pronoun...

Basic Algebra

Is bad arithmetic,
counting on good intentions alone.





Lux

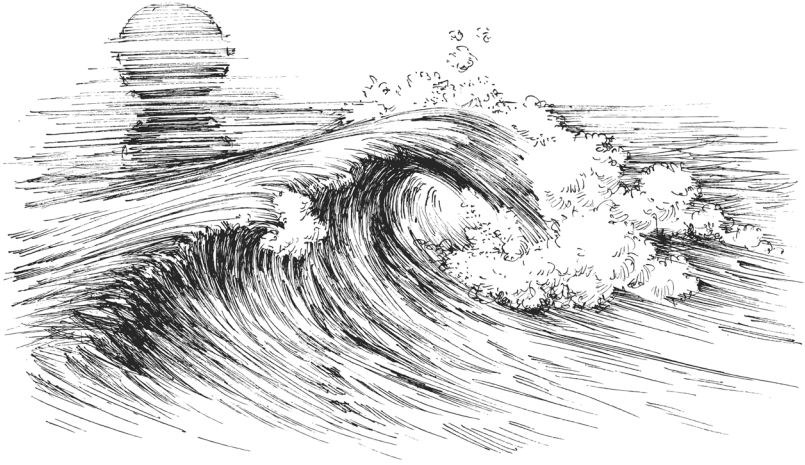
Was it a lamp twinkling
in the black of the forest?
Or a dot of conscience
on a dark heart?

Wavering

A ship out of port
must sail without doubt,
or meet its maker
in the embrace of deep waters.

Vision

It is a small mind which would think
of filling a cup
from the tides of a flood...



Ostrich

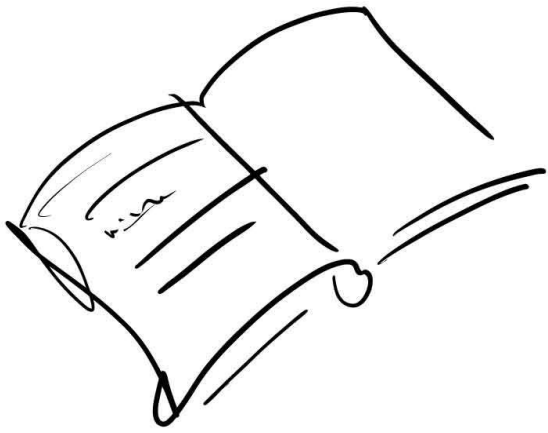
It is in our nature
to fortify our errors
against informed correction...

Chaff

What has one gathered
if all one has to show in life
is a collection of regrets?

Denouement

We all hold the Book of Climax.
For most, Destiny turns its pages.
For some - if they choose -
the last pages are redacted,
with the freedom to write at will...



Incommensurate

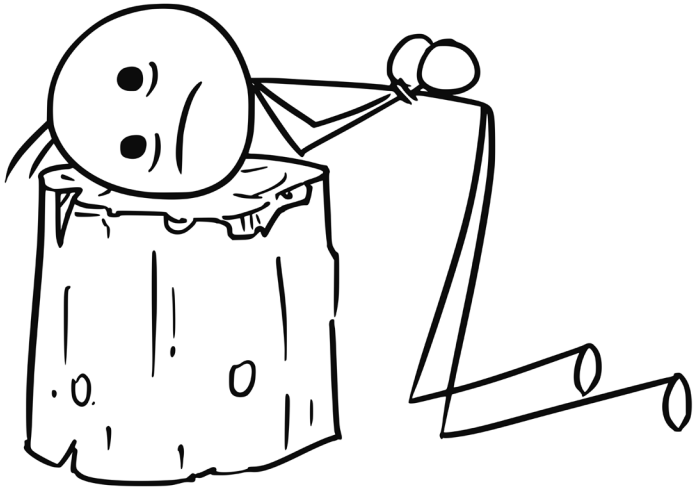
People can be uncouth incendiary brutes.
To find the needle in the haystack,
they resort to a match-stick

At First Sight

"Grow old with me!"
his wistful hope spoke out of turn,
resting on a small token
of but a hint of her smile...

Spectators

A thousand eyes watched impassively
the murder of the innocent man
with soulless blindness...



Boorish

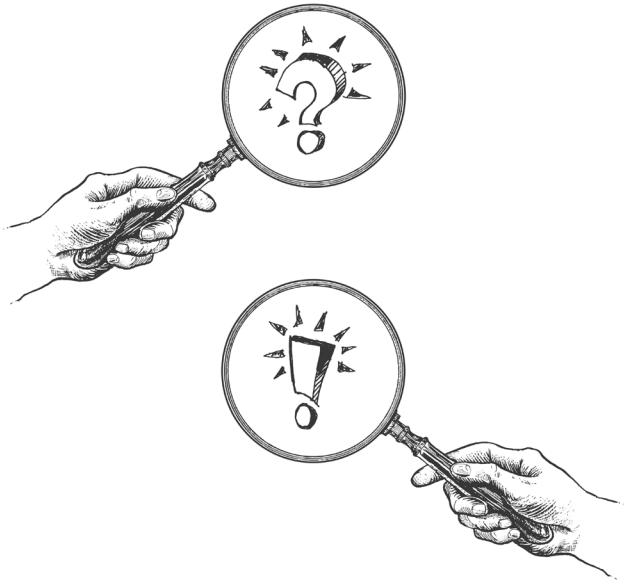
A man
of letters few
but words many.

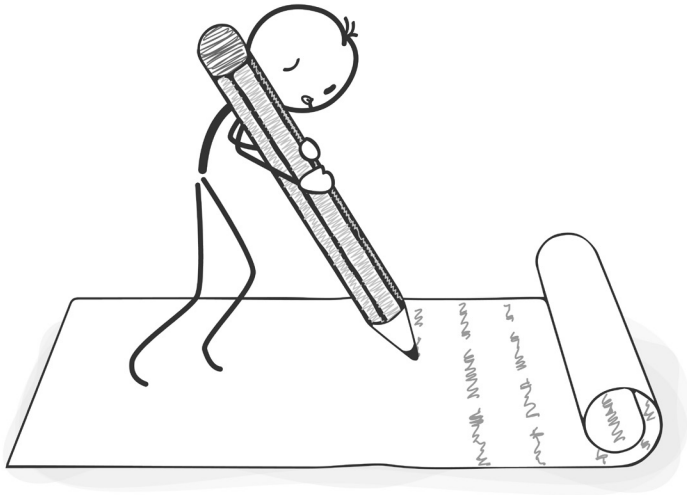
To Each Unto Itself

A wastebasket does not expect
deposits of silver coins.

Look! Ye Shall Find...

Often, if one looks, one finds
an interrogative fallen on the path.
Examine it.
It may be
a missive from the conscience.



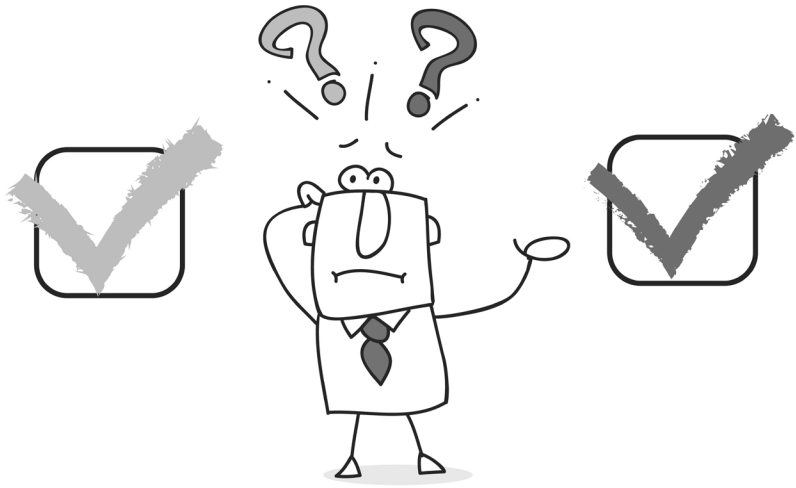


Pun-Dit

By his literary sword he rises,
the hero with cutting thoughts...

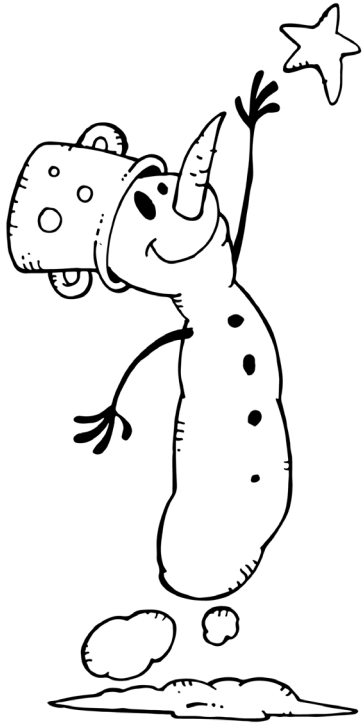
Shouldn't It?

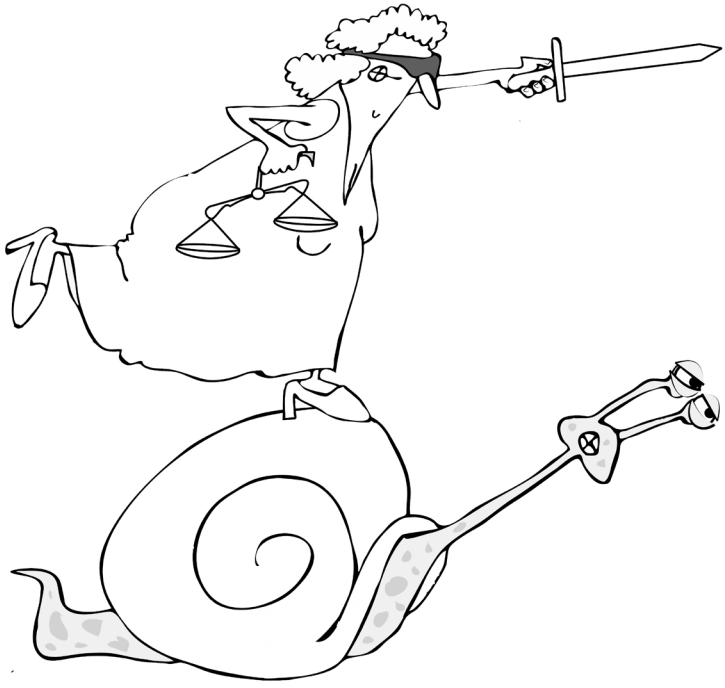
Do we seek truth
or gratification?
Doesn't falsehood,
with its ease of creation,
suffice?



Restraints

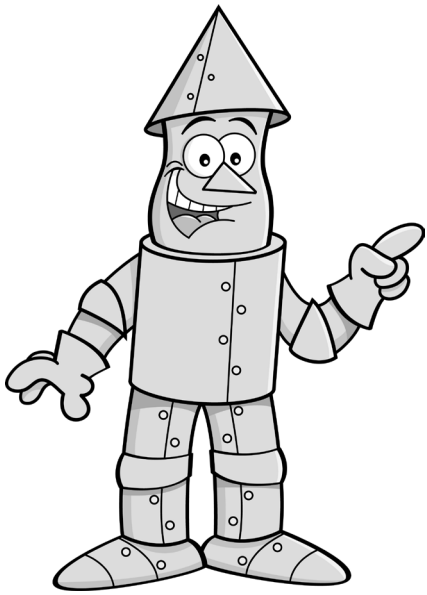
With sorrow I break my friendship with you,
Gravity,
for I must reach for the stars tomorrow.





A Law Of Nature

Industry is not the nature of Law
Slowly they turn,
those wheels of justice…



Modern Man

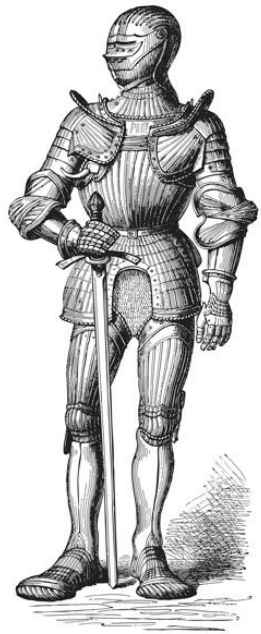
Where from cometh the rattling?

Ahh, I see him, post-renaissance…

A tin man
with a tin can
storing tin thoughts...

Braggadocio

Don not
a glittering armor
of fatigued metal.



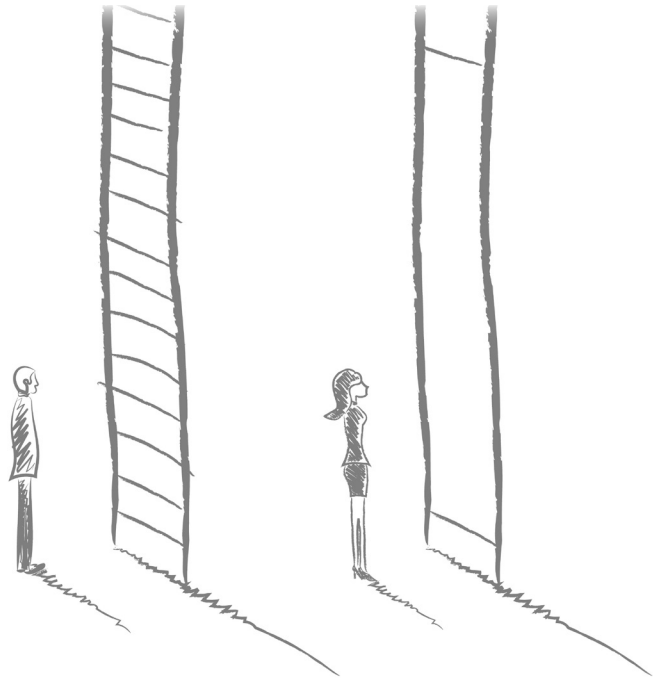
"Braggadoccio" ("brag-a-doe-chio") denotes the boastful, arrogant behavior of someone who appears with confident swagger. It was the name of a character in Edmund Spenser's (1552-1599) novel, "The Faerie Queen" (1590 to 1596).

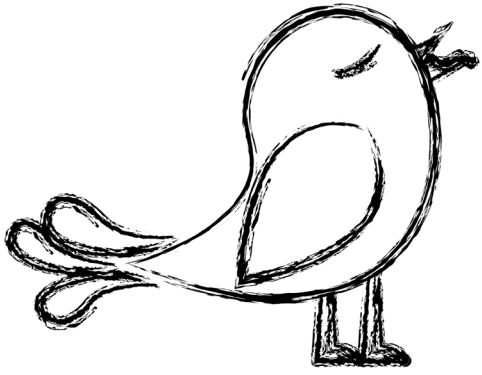
Style

Celebrate moments of great triumph
against a backdrop of quiet humility.

Essential

Every rung contains the soul of the ladder,
and when the last rung is dismantled,
all you are left with
are two wooden beams….
...divorced...





Barn Door

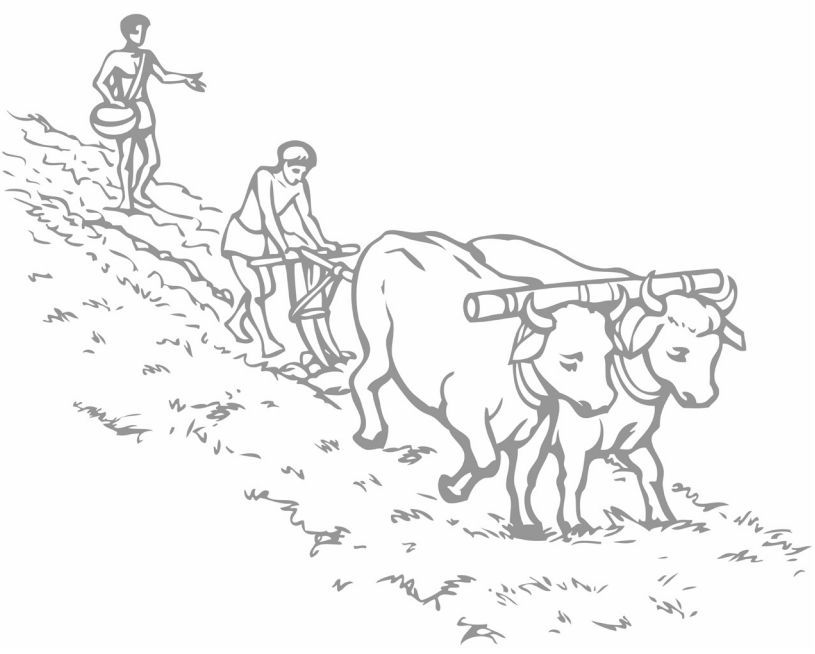
Vigilance!
The bird must shut its beak
once the insect steps inside.

Distillation

The essence of man:
some deeds,
some thoughts,
a thimbleful of dust...

Egalitarian

"One cannot pretend aristocracy",
they say.
Neither can one feign
the ruggedness of a commoner.



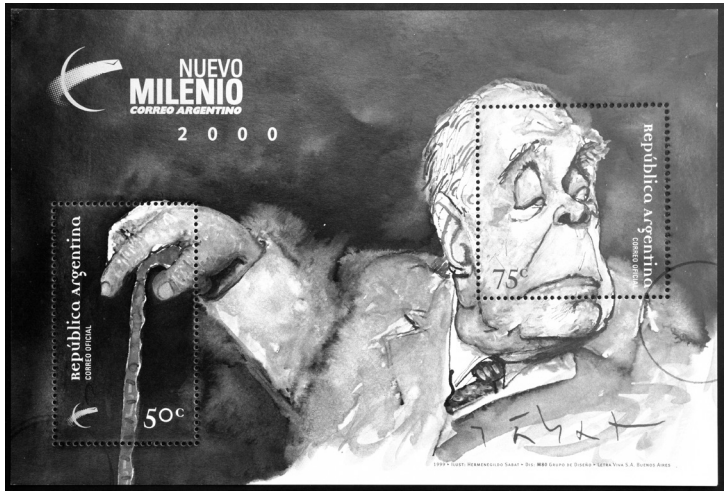
Limit

Logic is brought to its knees
in front of a dull mind,
or undying faith...

Jorge Luis Borges ("Horhay-loois Bor-hes") (1899-1986) was the legendary Argentinian writer who left a distinctive mark on Spanish literature, with prose and poetry which flow like smooth wine, woven around a myriad mystical and metaphysical concepts of mirror, infinity, labyrinth, grief, self-reference, and the like. His writings were very strongly influential on the development of a genre of literature called "Magic Realism" which covers writings depicting the subtle intrusion of the supernatural and the magical in the realistic occurrences of daily life.

The Master

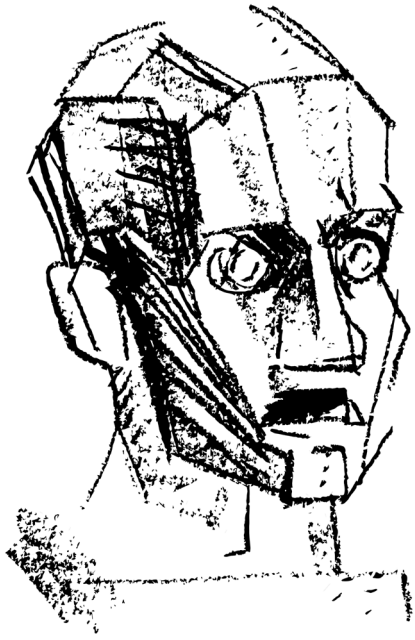
In only mild exaggeration
my mind thinks:
'Borges wrote flowing prose
while the world was learning the alphabet.'



Vanquished

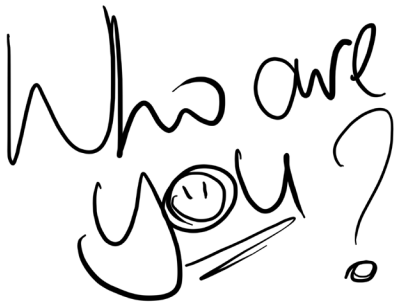
I stand defeated,
not knowing it,
in the face of Fate;

For while I revel in my Free Will,
the Future brooks no control...



Easy Habit

Drape your skin with simplicity,
and live comfortably inside it.

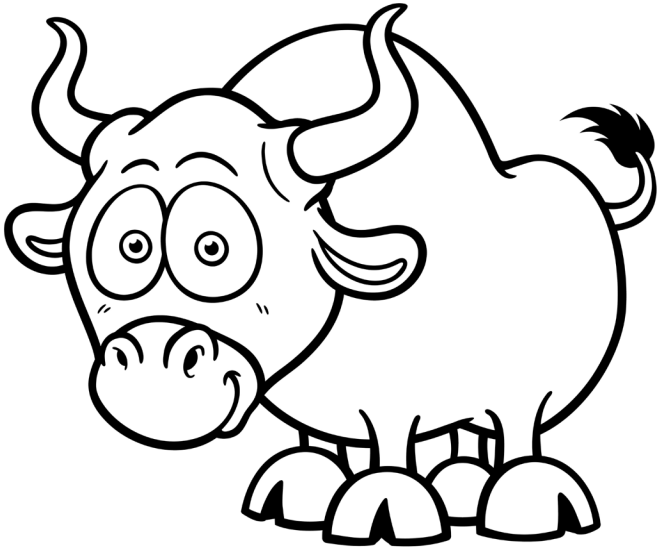


Why?

I want to die
Nonymous...

But Of Course!

It all depends
on whose ox did the goring...



Reflected Glory

A pygmy
standing on tall shoulders
remains a pygmy.

Negative Energy

It was the do-nothing pothole
which tripped and fell.
It was the guiding road
which was hurt.

Bequeath

A man rises above the ordinary
when he starts thinking about his legacy.

Moderate

At times,
the spoken word overstates its case.

To My Child

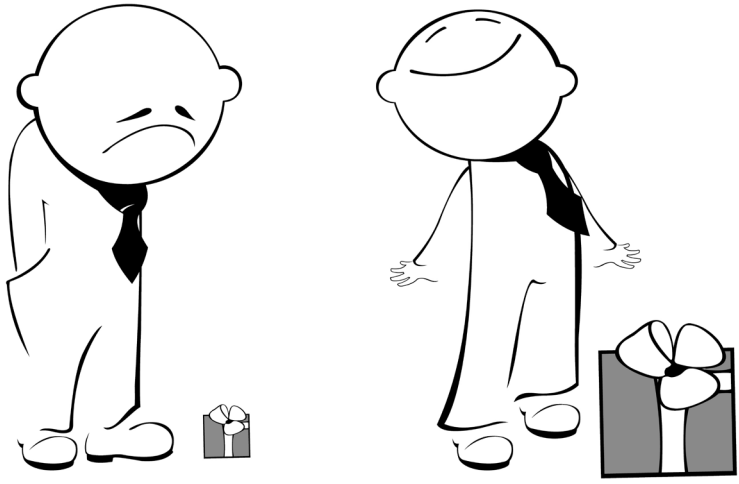
Hold my hand,
and with faith,
Fly...

Child-Like

"To the delight of men moves the moon",
suggests the poet.
Oh, such a charming observation!

Cherished

Long in the memory reside
the trivial details of childhood.



Still You Do...

Why should one feel deceived
when a friend speaks an unkindly truth?

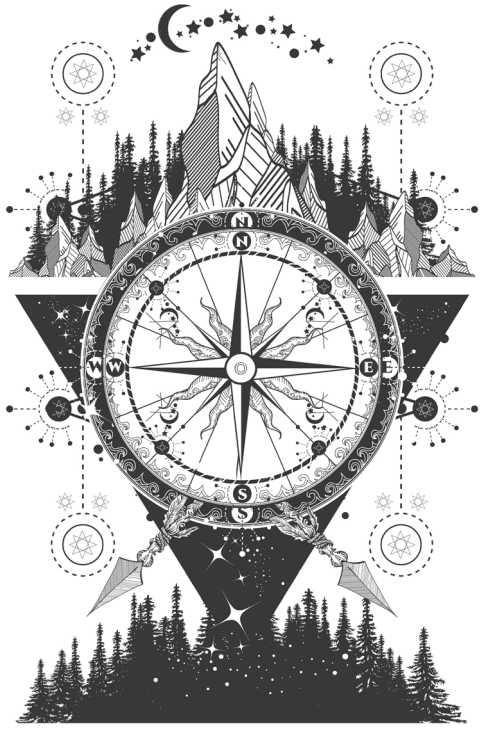
"Varnashram" is an ancient Indian scriptural concept arising from 2 Sanskrit words, "Varna" = "social class" and "ashram" = "place for shelter / retirement". It was first propounded in the Vedic text, "Manusmriti", written by Sage Manu, "the First Man of Hindu Mythology". This text was one of the "Dharma-shastras", scholarly texts which articulated the code of conduct for the populace. Its original purpose was to help people understand their own natures, social responsibilities and spiritual growth at different stages of life. In practice, this "caste system" was thoroughly misused by the upper classes to subjugate and keep the general populace in check for thousands of years, and large remnants of it persist to this day, unfortunately.

Varnashram

One wonders if the impossible
is merely a limit placed on man
to separate him from the exalted spirits...

A Dare

Roll aside the carpet
under which you've hidden
the inconvenient truths...



Extant

A comforting thought:
that all which remains to be discovered
already exists...

Alas!

A child has passed
the threshold of innocence.
There!
There stands a worldly man...

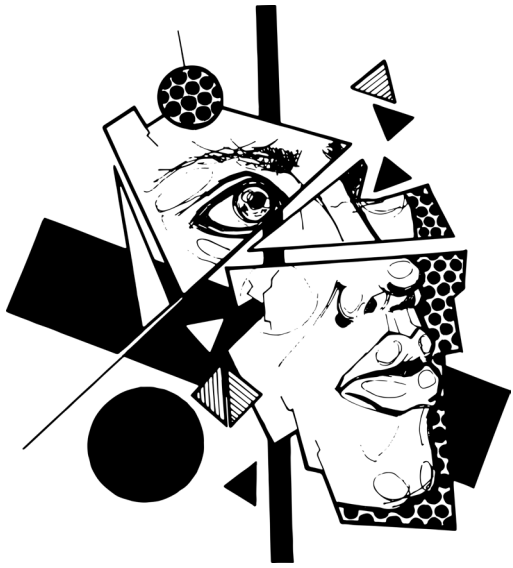
Swept Away

Ahoy there!
    Raise the anchor!
        Uncheck the drift of the heart!

For here she arrives,
    as the torrid flood…

Having Lived And Not Seen...

When the last light
had brushed his weary eyes,
and the last breeze
found his final breath,
that was the moment
his memory sparked large...
And he saw his heaven from his past.



Grasp

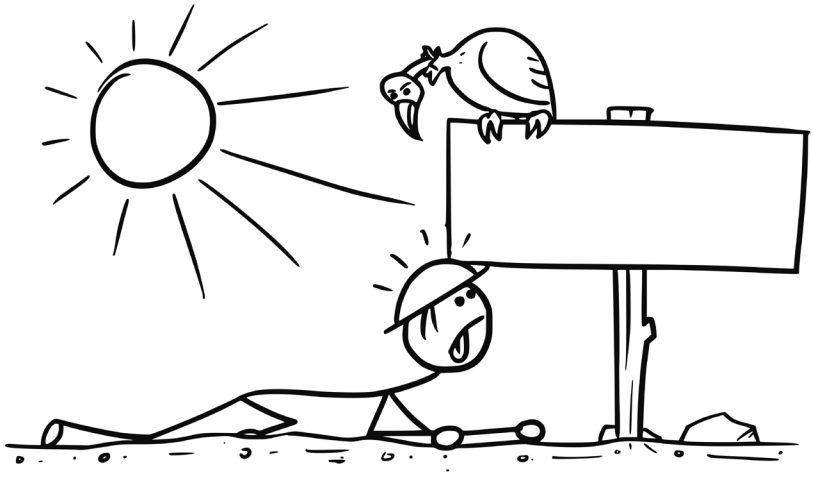
I spread my hand
and caught the moon in a pinch.
Such small immensity
from the right perch...

Impulsate!

Let the present moment
take hold of your passions;
there is time enough for the future.

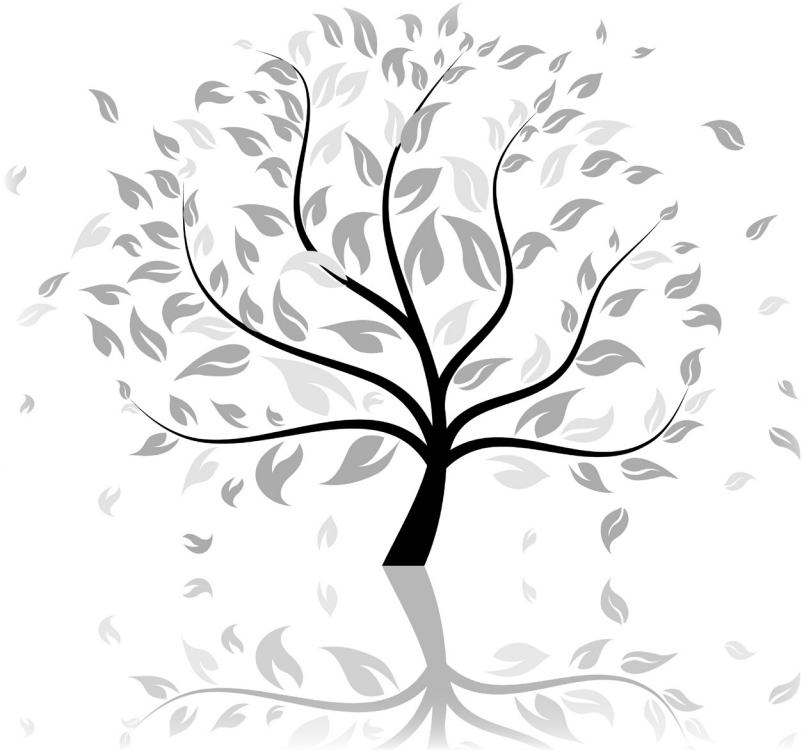
Intentions

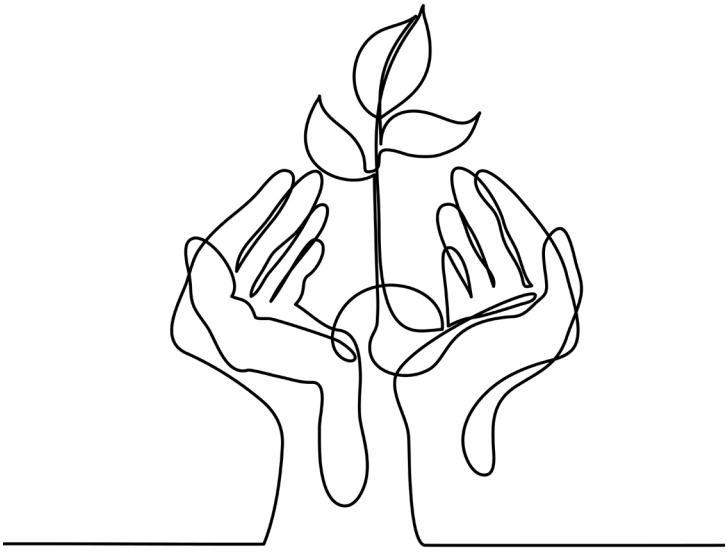
The little trivialities of life
gather up in weight...
burying all good intentions.



Renewal

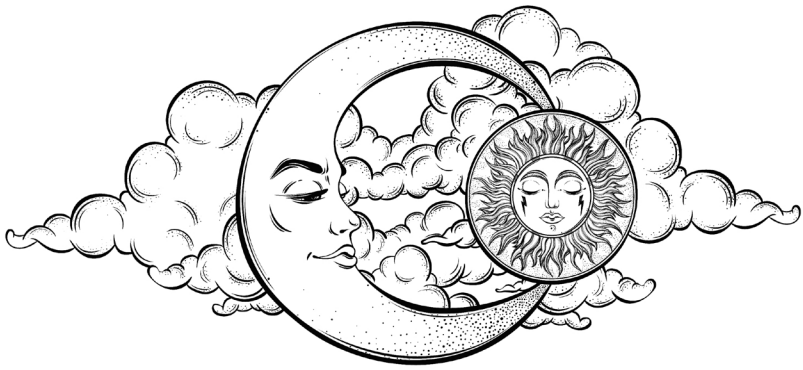
Shed not a tear
for the fallen leaves;
'tis the Autumn which heralds
the Spring on the horizon.





Treasures

What regret
    for that which slips the fingers?
Wondrous the finds
    held back in the grasp…

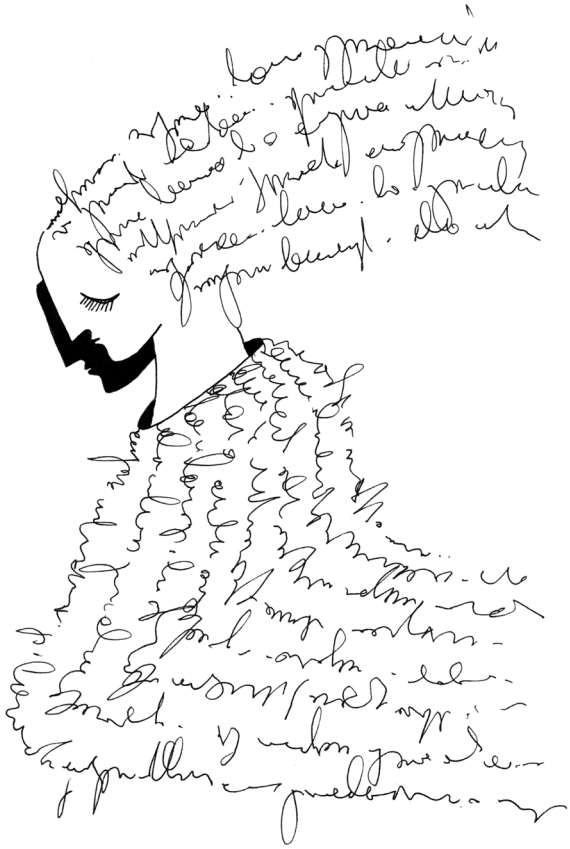


Borrowed

In all its beaming pride the moon rose,
blissfully unaware,
shining in reflected glory.

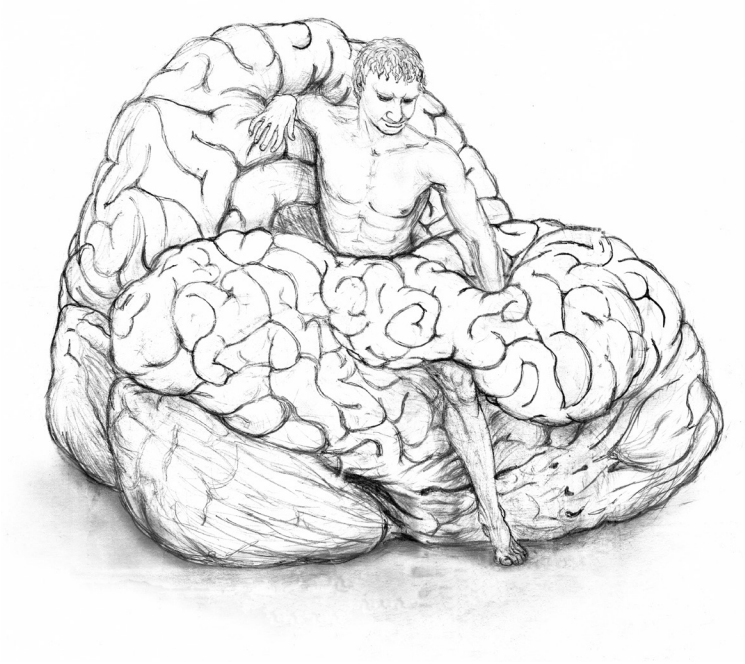
Scripture Rapture

In solitude open your mind like a book;
there is wonder between those covers.



Wondrous

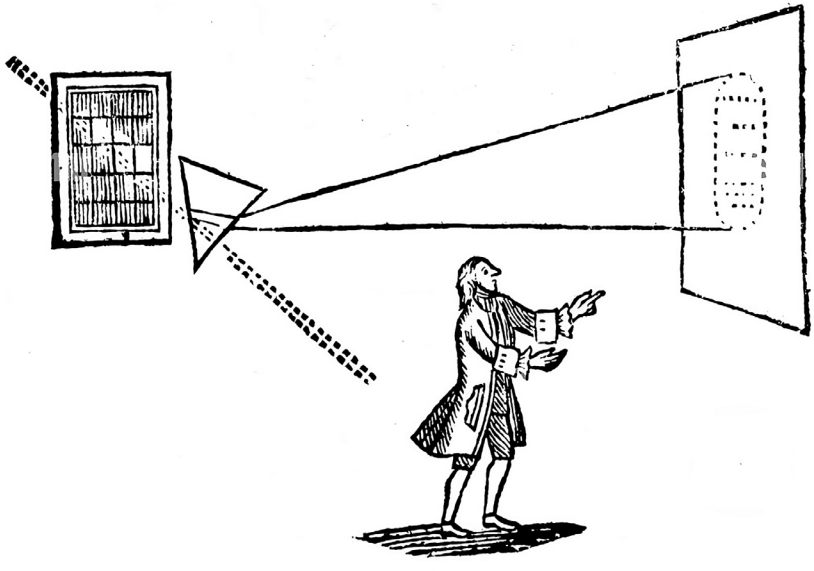
It is not everyday
that one dreams of Reality.
Seize that thought
when the moment befalls.

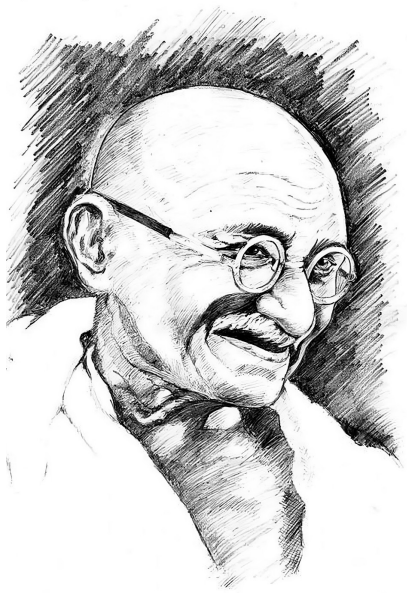


Palette

One always colors the truth;
never it stays black or white.

What shade of truth, that?





One cannot but state a deeply spiritual thought written into a hymnal song by Narasimha Mehta in the 15th century in India, made famous for its adoption by Mahatma Gandhi, and sung in an eternal voice by Indian legend, Lata Mangeshkar. The thought goes:

"Vashnav jana to tene kahiye je
peer parayi jaaniye..."

"Only the one who has felt viscerally the deep suffering of the fellow man may be called a child of Lord Vishnu..."

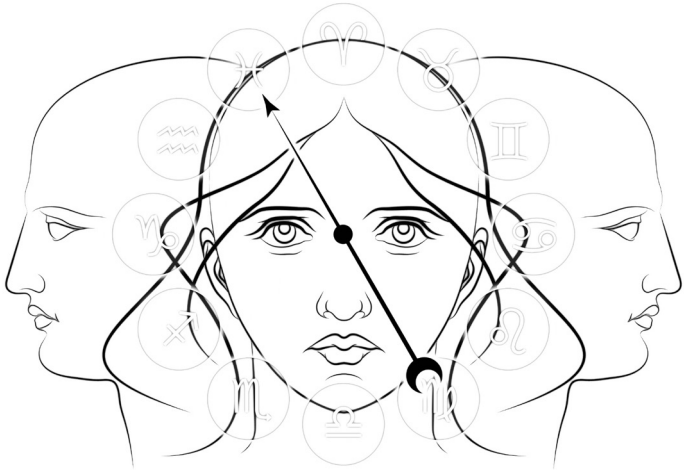
Method Actor

He who cries,
suffering understands.

Identity

Be the corners
which bend lines to their will.

Malala Yousafzai (1997-) is the youngest winner of the Nobel Prize in history, having been awarded the Peace prize in 2014 for her inordinate amount of courage in standing up to the Pakistani Taliban.



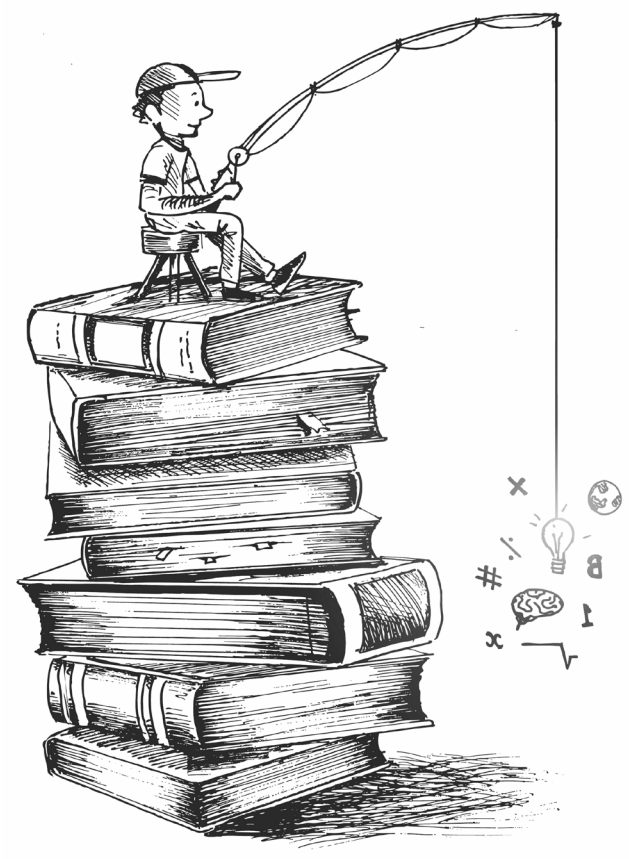
Make-Believe

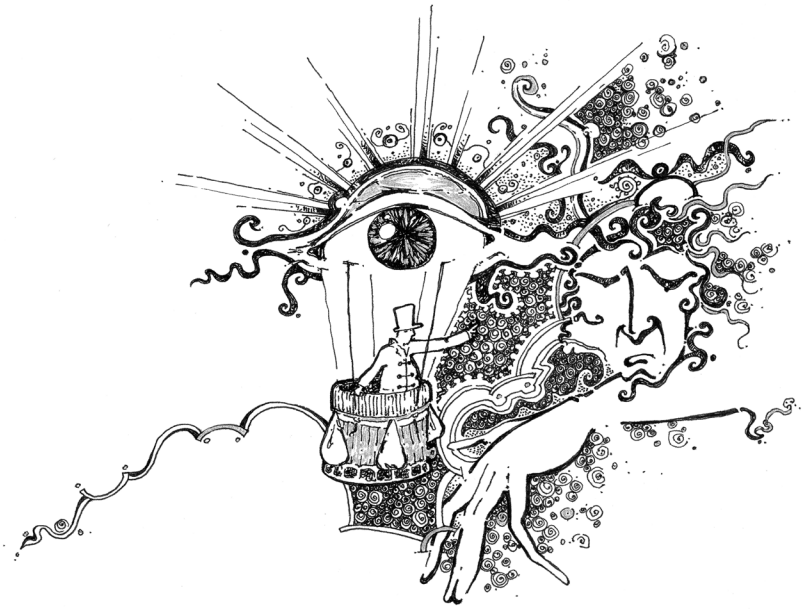
Gods and Demons.

Mere beings of imagination,
subject to the whims and caprice
of collective will;
of social dreams;
of mortal fears;
of superstition...

Allure

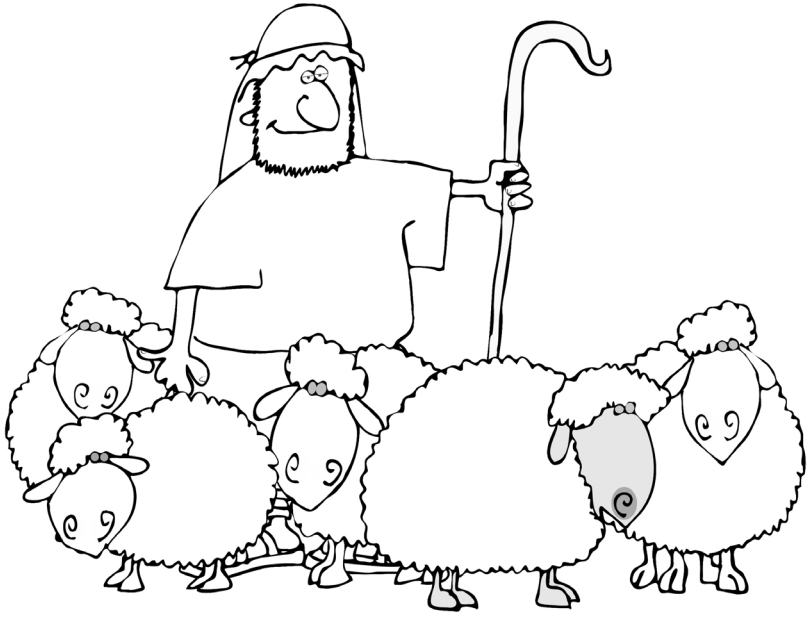
The mystery of a book endures
while its covers are unread.





Partial Amnesia

The memory is a mirror
stealing its reflections selectively.



Bleat

Rail against the style shepherds.
Don't be too much of a conforming goat.

Appearances

Let us pretend
that all is as was deigned,
for to behave otherwise
would be ugly.

In the division of the vast timescales propounded by Hindu scriptures, one of the units is a “world-age”, called a “yuga”. There are 4 yugas of varying lengths, spanning thousands of years. The four yugas - Satyug, Tretayug, Dvaparyug, and Kaliyug - represent progressively declining states of human affairs. The current “Kaliyuga” represents moral turpitude and spiritual corruption of the highest order. This is the state which invites the Lord to trigger a full-scale destruction of earth so that there can be a renewal. This destruction is prophesied to be carried out by the tenth (and final) avatar of Vishnu, knowns as “Kalki”.

Kaliyug

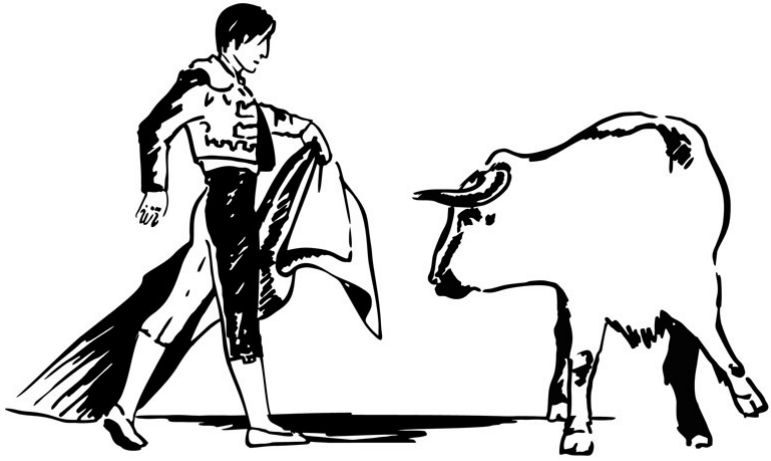
No one lives
by truth on his tongue,
or fealty on his mind.
These are the signs
of our inherited times...

Self-Aware Under A Bodhi Tree

We are all scrambled pieces of a puzzle,
with limited time to put the parts together.
To die having completed the picture,
that is the way of Buddha.

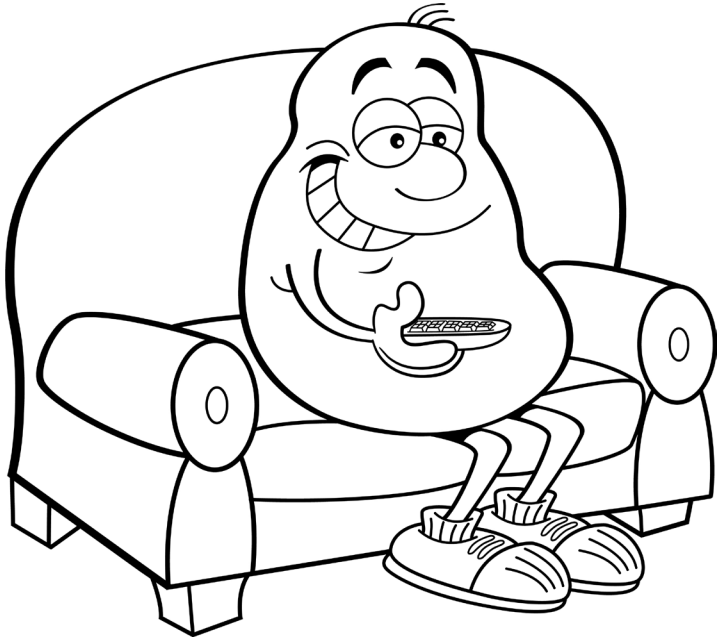
Fear?

A bull with two horns
appears an opportunity to a matador.



Couch Potato

A potted plant might appreciate it
if the pot got up
and walked around once in a while.



Sadly...

We need no ghosts or ghouls.
There are men of dark talents.

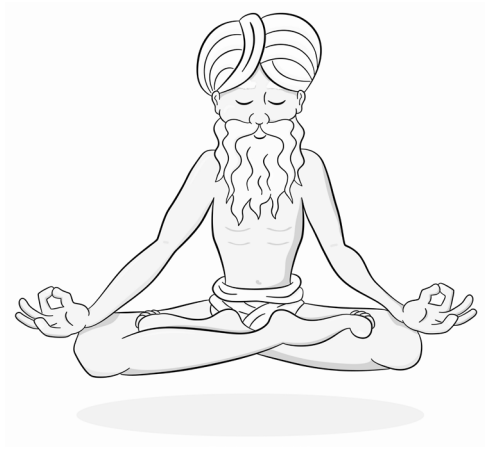
Dearly Departed

Once upon a time,
Common Sense
was a commoner's leader.

On a dark day,
the mobs assassinated him.

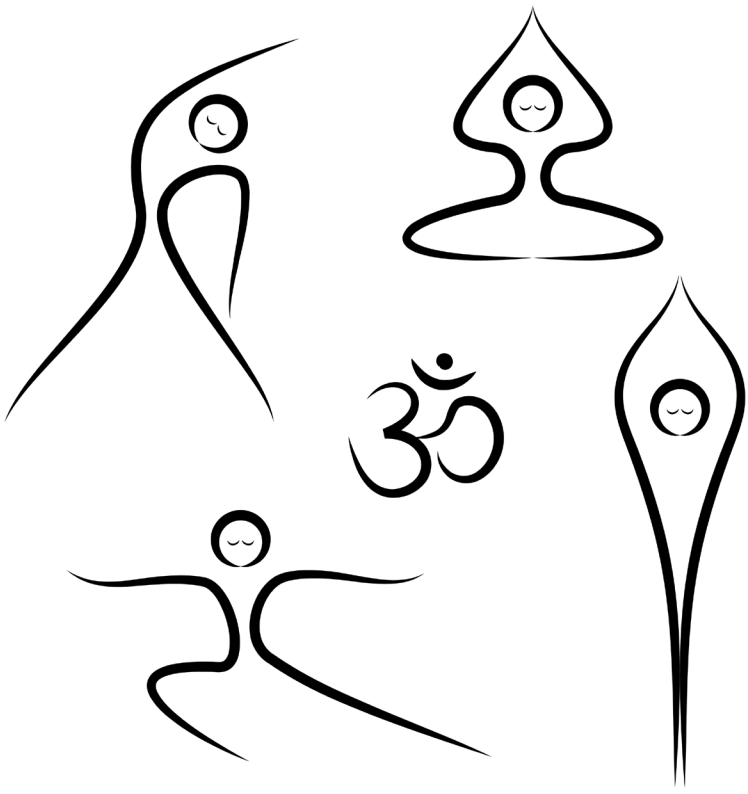
Obligation

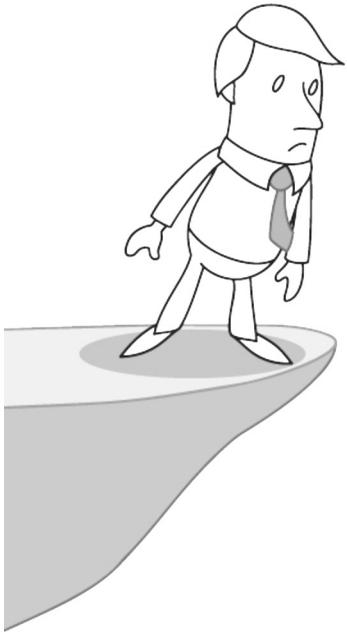
Is the failure of conviction
necessarily the fault of the believer?
Does not the canon owe
a responsibility of veracity to its followers?



The Slow Orchard

Salvation does not appear
at request or demand.
The fruits of penance ripen at their pace.





Imagine In A Dream

Stand still at a pointed precipice,
a prisoner to your balance,
and smile at the abyss,
before it claims your long fall...

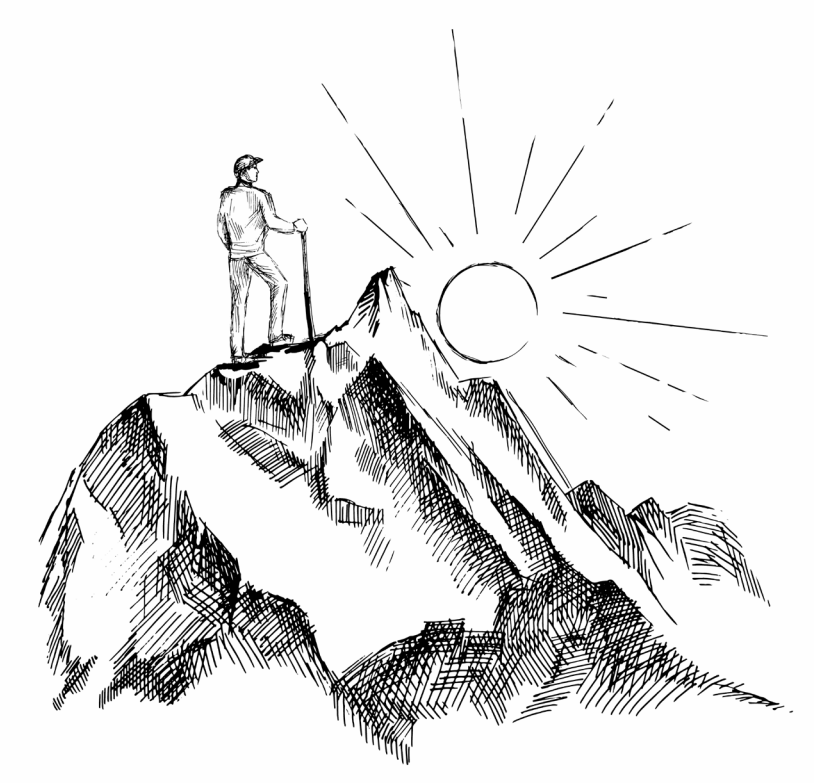
Kurt Godel (1906-1978) was one of the deepest logicians in history, responsible for many singular contributions involving the nature and characteristics of the foundations of mathematics. One of his most celebrated results is encapsulated in 2 theorems, called *"Godel's Incompleteness Theorems"*. These theorems essentially imply that a system of logic which is complex enough to contain some concepts of numbers and counting also contains within itself innate limits to what can be proved *about* the system *from within that system*. In particular, if the axioms of the system are consistent, then it will contain assertions which cannot be proved to be true or false within that system. And further, you would not even be able to prove that the system itself is consistent unless you added some additional assumptions, which would defeat the purpose.

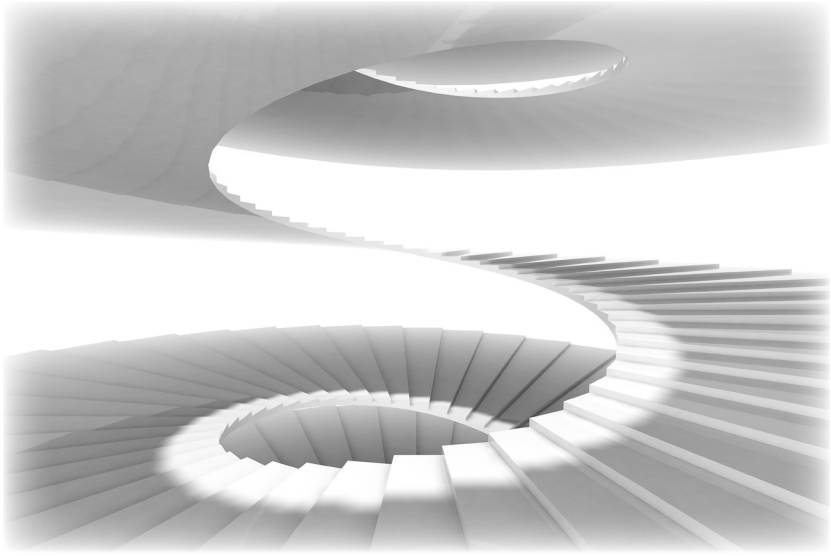
Epiphany

Oh!
To die without understanding
Godel's theorem!
For want of another life...
For need of another mind…

Downhill

The agony of fulfillment...
for all paths lead away in time...





For The Pilgrim

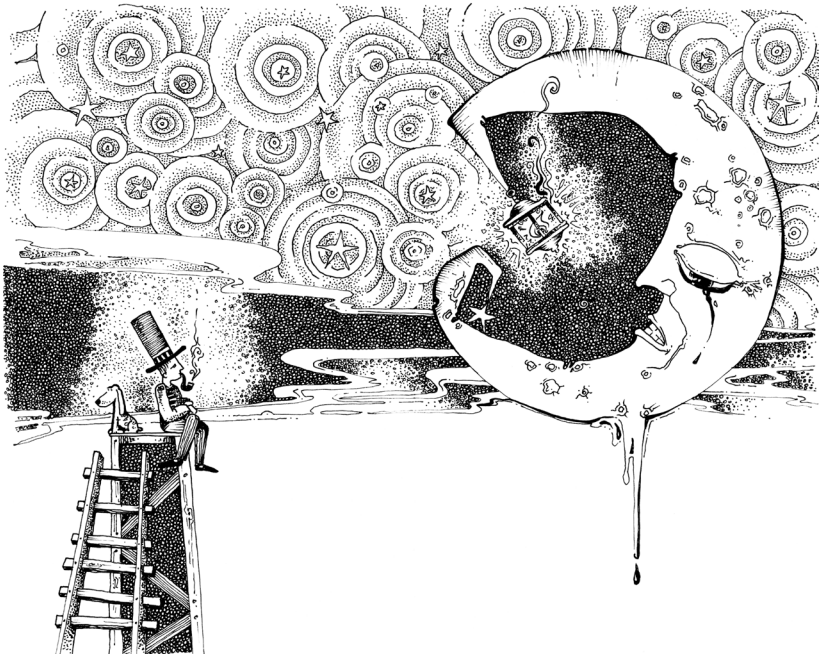
The traveler's tunnel
passeth through earth,
Hades and Heaven alike...

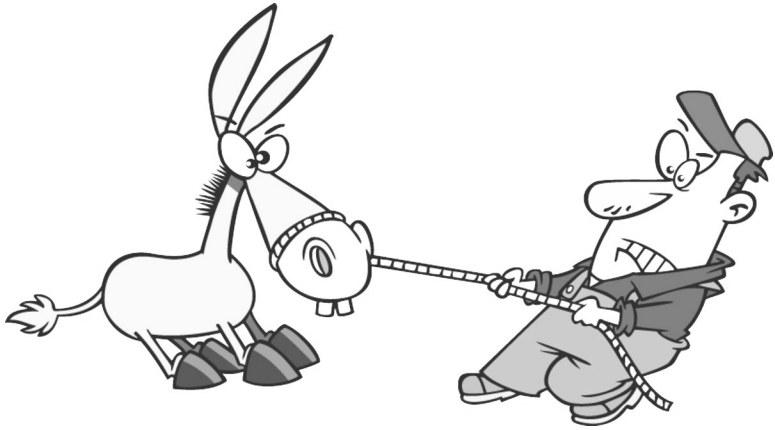
Imagine That!

Humans…

Alive,
Sentient.
Fabulously Unpredictable.

We are the stuff of fables
for the Other Realm…



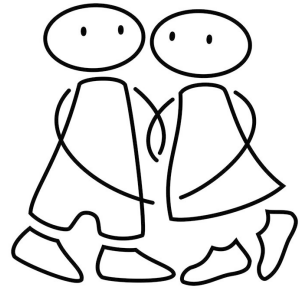


Obviously

When the horse is unwilling,
there's little the hay-wagon can do.

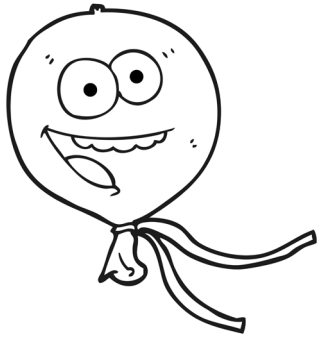
Unscattered

Of what import your pronouncements,
when words fall at your feet,
not to be borne by the winds,
to the four corners of land's end?



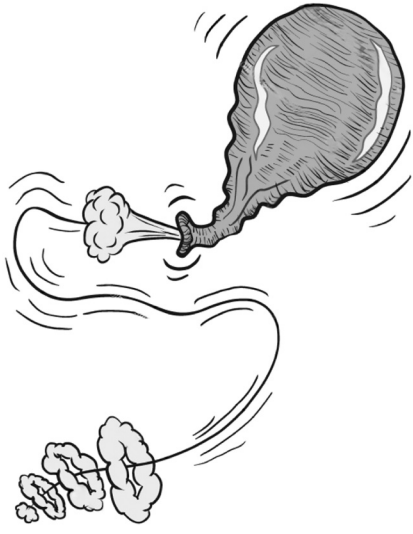
What Else?

An anticipation there is in life...
For you…



Cost

A rising balloon expanding with pride;
sooner than later pays its price...



Set Aside...

Let us not discourage ourselves.
Let not the minor pebbles of doubt
dissuade
the endeavors to move the mountains.

Eruditorium

In these frothing waters of grey bubbles,
hot air passes for erudition...

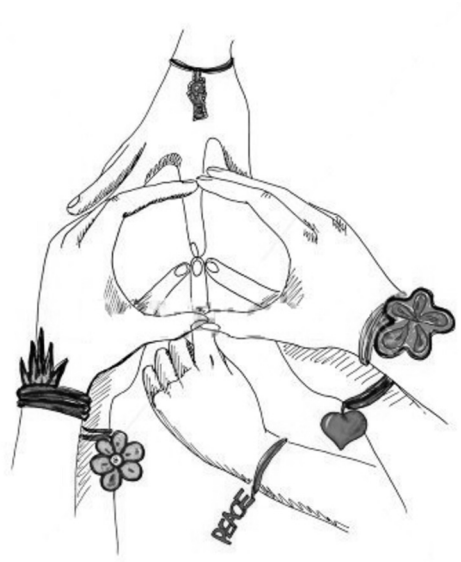
Religion

Is She God
if She is someone else's God?

Semantics

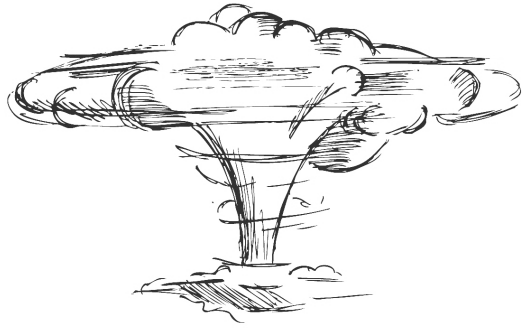
Is it envy I feel,
or disappointment in myself?

Defeated



Healer

Where be the loom,
to weave a blanket of peace,
on the shivering, bruised body of war?



Source-Coded

A reflection may promise fidelity,
but never perfection.

On a figurative level, the "reflection" in the quote refers to introspection. In reality, such reflections in humans rarely have fidelity (interpreted not as *"being accurate"* but as *"being truthful to yourself"*), though the promise and its fruits remain. Perfection in introspection, of course, is self-elusive...

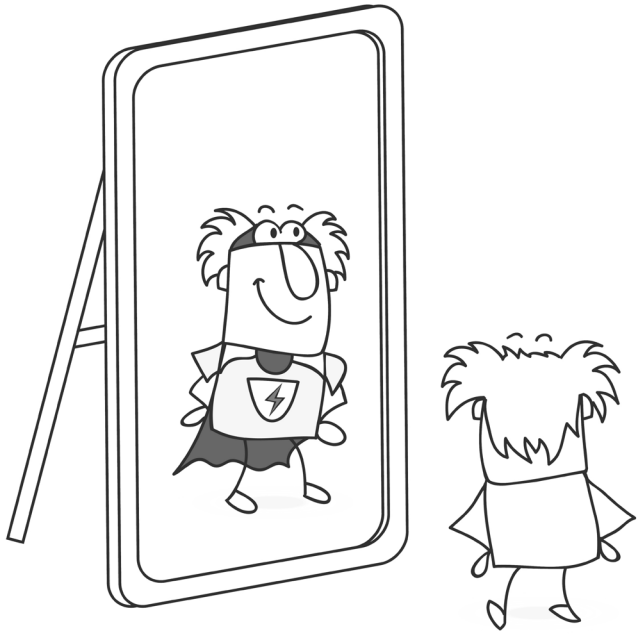
Row!

Idle oars tread no waves;
lazy hands maroon the skiff.

So One Thinks

With a sigh of relief
pent up for a millennium,
the sage tree fell straight…

...but not a sound it made,
in the absence of someone to hear it...



Unilateral

A mirror shows but one side.

In various mythologies, the concept of "The Word" arises in many different ways, simultaneously conveying a vague image of illimitable generative power and mystical depth. E.g. the very first line of the Bible says, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"*. "The Word" often signifies something universal, something Platonic which is beyond language, articulation, and comprehension, representing a timeless truth which brings about the reality around us by its own sheer force of will.

The image shows Lord Shiva from the Hindu mythology manifesting from the sacred Sanskrit syllable, "Aum", or "Om". "Aum" is considered in many Eastern religions to be the mysterious hum of Creation, all-pervading, all-enchanting, all-creating.

In The Beginning...

An epic.
A fable.
A single word.

Circe ("Sir-see") was a nymph in Greek mythology, the daughter of sun-god, Helios, and the Oceanid nymph, Perse. She was skilled in the art of illusion and transformation, as well as potions and herbs, which she could use to lead her human victims astray. Her most famous tale appears in Homer's epic, "Odyssey", where she turns all of Odysseus' men into swines, but relents after he agrees to stay on with her as a lover.

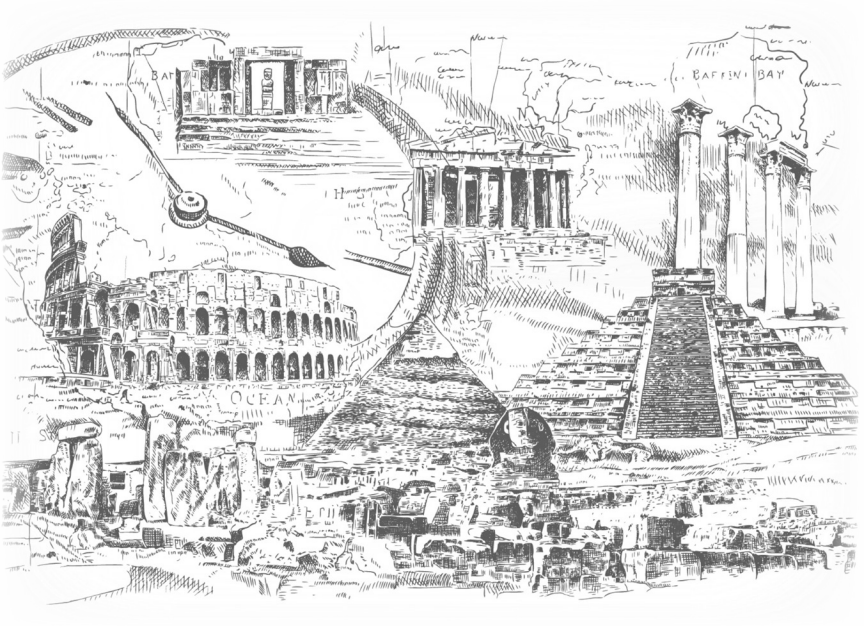
In common parlance, Circe is sometimes used as a metaphor to refer to a feminine figure who can lead a man to his destruction.

Immolation

A moth casts away its self-esteem
in a meaningless act of masochism,
facing the unrequiting love
of a Circean flame.

Tea Leaves

In the patterns of time
is written the fate of history...



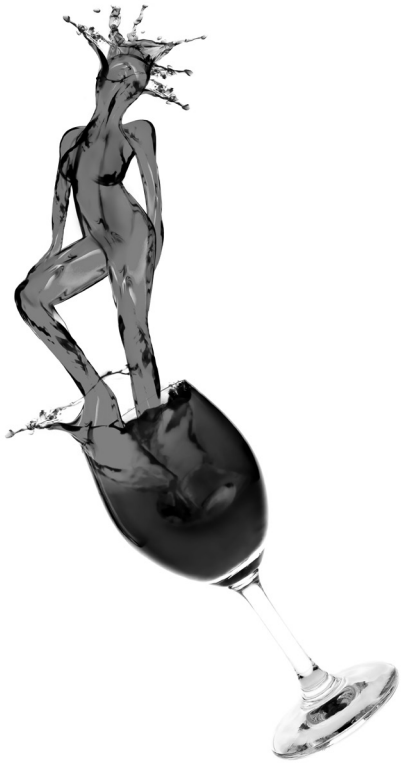
The Spurned Lover's Mirror Spake

Fickleness, thy name is woman,
Vanity a minor flaw;
frivolous form thy talons have,
coquettish the cutting claws.

The image under the quote shows one of the most famous characters in literature, “Don Quixote” (“kee-ho-tay”), Alonso Quijano, along with his faithful sidekick, Sancho Panza, appearing in the legendary Spanish novel, “Don Quixote” by Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616). They are charging a group of windmills, under the imaginary thought that those were giant enemies. The novel documents the comical escapades of a minor nobleman who tires of a sedentary life, loses his mind, and sets off on adventures of delusion woven into, and juxtaposed against, real-world happenings. In general usage, based on this literary character, any quest, activity, or course of action which seems strange or quikry in the extreme is referred to as “Quixotic”.

Go-Getter

One does not wait upon an adventure;
none ever arrives.
You must meet it on its own turf,
or make peace with a phlegmatic life.



Inebriate Liberally!

Spare not the efforts, my friend!
Pour!
Pour forthwith!
Let your bottomless flask
    meet my drunken goblet...

Cohabit

In comfort they reside in us,
our inherent conflicts.

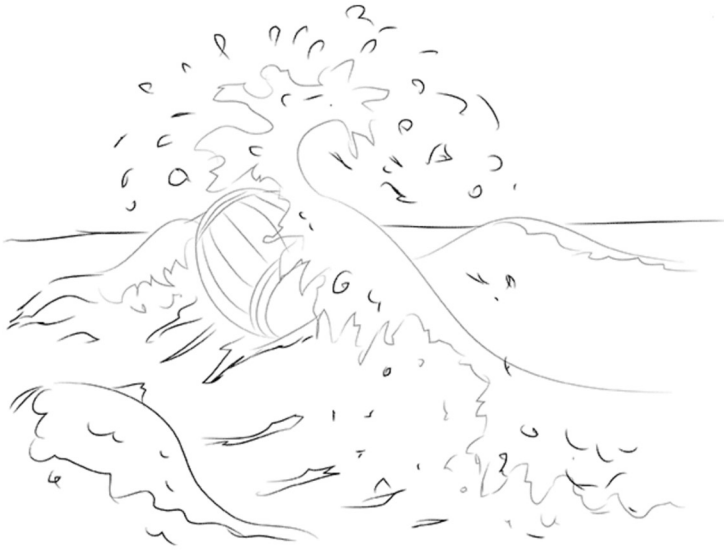
A Thought Pre-Launch

A speeding arrow
knows no peace.

Chip Away

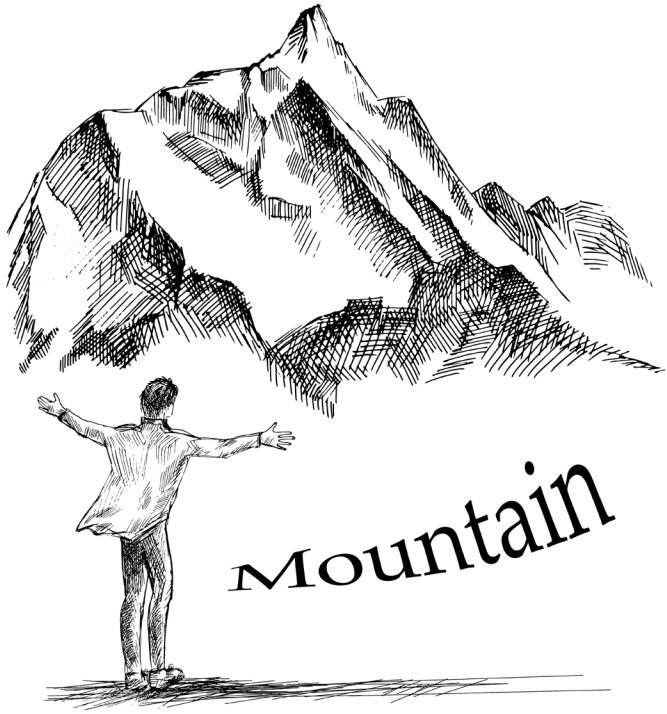
A losing battle it seems,
the wave, ever and anon,
breaking apart on the rocks.

In a thousand years,
find the victor,
spreading itself
on the languorous beach,
over and over...



Perspective

A mountain tall a thousand miles,
or stands a mite a-front a pebble?
Such are gods, and such are men,
and we know not of whom we speak...

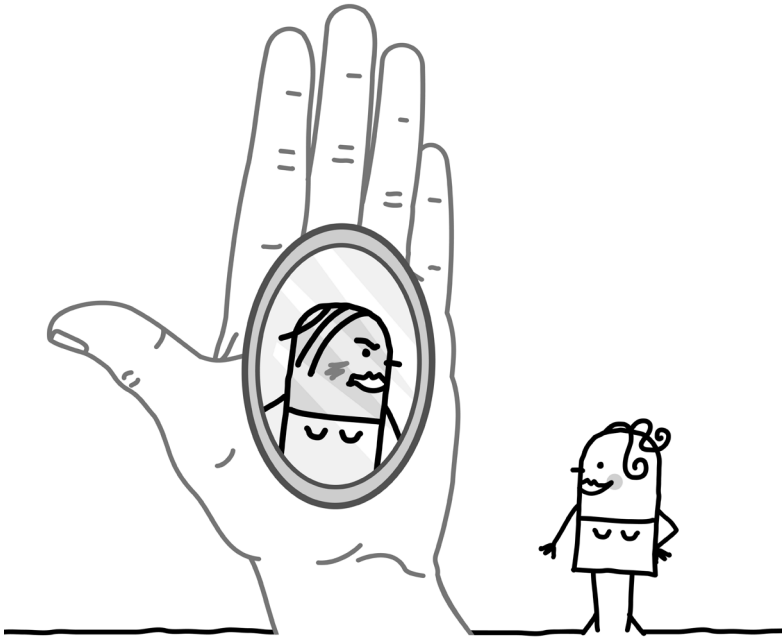


A Footnote In An Ignored Book

The shame of the land
of ten thousand lakes:
a man died of crying thirst...

A Piece Here, A Piece There

The mirrors carry their own world,
and our identity.



Dignity

The mortal spirit strives
for a decent death in life.

Consider this an invitation to write, dear reader, for as Borges wrote,

"In vain have oceans been squandered on you,
in vain the sun,
wonderfully seen through Whitman's eyes.
You have used up the years
and they have used up you,
and still,
and still,
you have not written the poem"...

The image depicts the mythological origins of the longest poem ever created - the Indian epic, "Mahabharata", which Sage Ved Vyaas dictated to Lord Ganesha in an uninterrupted stream of creative inspiration, as if written straight on to the sage's mindscape by Goddess Saraswati.

Write!

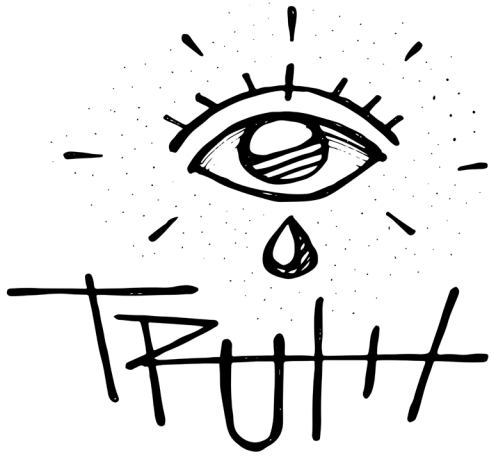
Every pen has a story to tell;
if only the worldly eyes descried...
of pencil and chalk the elusive tales,
the treasured soul of a simple scribe...

Garnish

Must you recall every detail?
Will not some lies satisfy?

Companions

With what facility should I shed these tears?
These tears...
which were my only solace
when you had left...



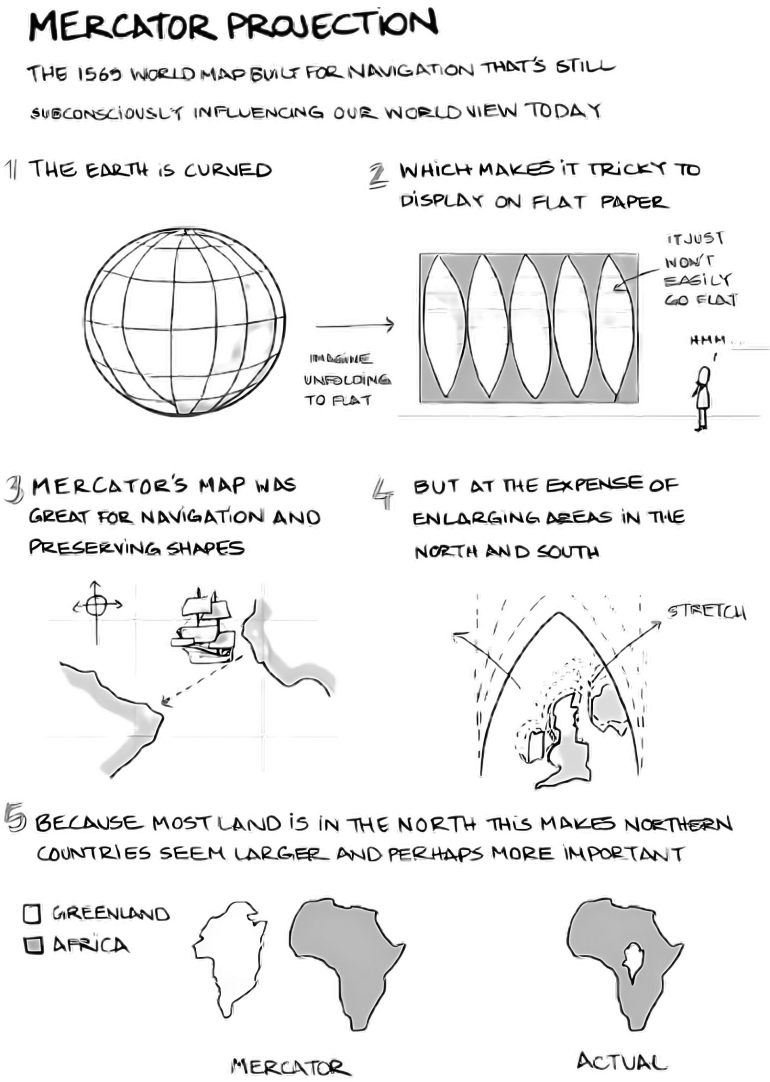

MERCATOR PROJECTION
THE 1569 WORLD MAP BUILT FOR NAVIGATION THAT'S STILL SUBCONSCIOUSLY INFLUENCING OUR WORLD VIEW TODAY
1 THE EARTH IS CURVED
2 WHICH MAKES IT TRICKY TO DISPLAY ON FLAT PAPER
IMAGINE UNFOLDING TO FLAT
IT JUST WON'T EASILY GO FLAT
HMM...
3 MERCATOR'S MAP WAS GREAT FOR NAVIGATION AND PRESERVING SHAPES
4 BUT AT THE EXPENSE OF ENLARGING AREAS IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH
STRETCH
5 BECAUSE MOST LAND IS IN THE NORTH THIS MAKES NORTHERN COUNTRIES SEEM LARGER AND PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT
GREENLAND
AFRICA
MERCATOR
ACTUAL

Image: Jono Hey, sketchplanations.com
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Pun2

A Mercator map lies with its straight face.

The Mercator Map is the common, rectangular geographical map where parallel horizontal and vertical grid lines show latitudes and longitudes respectively. On this grid are mapped the various geographical locations on earth. Such a mapping of a sphere on to a cylindrical / flat surface distorts the polar regions, since the north and south poles are stretched into world-spanning lines instead of being points. Therefore, the landmasses closer to the poles appear significantly larger than in reality when compared to those near the equator. e.g. on the map, Greenland appears to be the same size as Africa, even though the latter is 14 times larger in reality... The Mercator Map does lie!

Drowned...

The orbs,
    full of fair spirit,
sit there
    watching in amusement
my spirited resistance...

...they slur with drunken charm:

"He whose lips
hesitate at the cup
never shall he truly taste
the promise of its delicious fate."

Contra-Position

The wine lost the battle
and drowned in his grief.

One Wishes...

To be blessed, it must feel,
bequeathed by the lettered fortune
of an ancestral will…

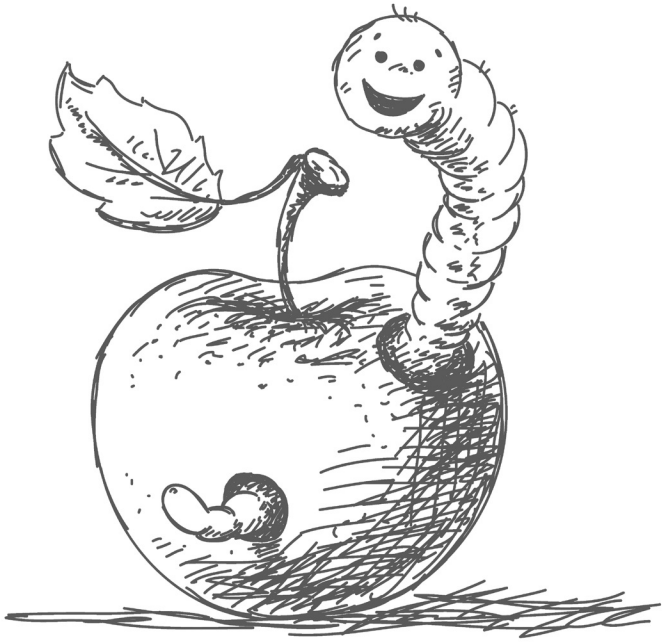
Blind Justice?

Tie as you may,
the black blinkers on her eyes!

How would you propose we hide
from that third eye of Truth?

Geometric Credo

Draw a principled circumference.
It locates your steady center.



Seeds

Rotten roots,
bitter fruits.

Sisyphus ("See-see-fuss") was the famous king of Corinth in Greek mythology. He was cursed by the Underworld God, Hades, for having cheated Death. The sentence was an eternal, fruitless task where Sisyphus would roll a boulder up a hill all day, only to watch it roll down at the end of it, before reaching the hill-top. Hence, any task which seems to be repetitive, endless, thankless, and fruitless is called "Sisyphean".

Tenured

In life
you're born a Sisyphus,
destined to keep pushing up the rock,
in hopes,
that someday,
you become the rock,
to be pushed up
by another Sisyphus...

Index to Quotes

A boat: Just a floating piece…
Viewpoint **68**

A bull with two horns…
Fear? **147**

A charlatan walked as a prophet…
Senseless… **16**

A child has passed the threshold…
Alas! **124**

A comforting thought…
Extant **123**

A hand raised to strike…
Pose **31**

A losing battle it seems…
Chip Away **183**

A man of letters few…
Boorish **91**

A man rises above the ordinary…
Bequeath **114**

A man's character is always…
Precarious **67**

A Mercator map…
Pun2 **193**

A mirror shows…
Unilateral **171**

A moth casts away…
Immolation **175**

A mountain tall a thousand...
Perspective **184**

A potted plant might appreciate...
Couch Potato **148**

A pygmy standing...
Reflected Glory **112**

A reflection may promise...
Source-Coded **168**

A rising balloon expanding...
Cost **162**

A ship out of port...
Wavering **83**

A speeding arrow...
A Thought Pre-Launch **182**

A thousand eyes watched...
Spectators **90**

A wastebasket does not expect...
To Each Unto Itself **92**

Ahh, such loss! ...
Parochial **27**

Ahoy there! ...
Swept Away **125**

An anticipation there is...
What Else? **161**

An epic. A fable...
In The Beginning… **173**

An inherent obfuscation...
True **74**

Anyone can be enchanted...
Out Of The Ordinary **76**

Are we not a game of Bluff...
Card-Game **41**

As the tide of life recedes...
Residue **2**

Ask not why the air is foul...
Miasma **42**

Asks, he does...
Interrogative **5**

At times, the spoken word...
Moderate **115**

Be the corners which bend...
Identity **138**

By his literary sword...
Pun-Dit **94**

Celebrate moments of great...
Style **100**

Cheap are the words...
Enigma **72**

Choose your arms...
Armory **66**

Dawn to dusk, lust to dust...
Curse **23**

Do not dispute your thirst...
It Giveth Only **4**

Do not frown at...
Epsilon **65**

Do we seek truth…
Shouldn't It? **95**

Don not a glittering armor…
Braggadocio **99**

Drape your skin with simplicity…
Easy Habit **109**

Draw a gentle sea…
Sketch It **28**

Draw a principled circumference…
Geometric Credo **198**

Every pen has a story…
Write! **189**

Every rung contains…
Essential **101**

Fate does not wait…
Face Up! **64**

Fickleness, thy name is woman…
The Spurned Lover's Mirror Spake **177**

From ashes to rose…
Evolve **33**

Gods and Demons…
Make-Believe **139**

Gone are the days…
Lost World **63**

Grieve not the moment of excess…
Indulge **62**

"Grow old with me!"…
At First Sight **89**

He and his fate walk together...
Led **1**

He appreciates the true worth...
First Hand **61**

He who cries...
Method Actor **137**

Hold my hand...
To My Child **116**

Humans...
Imagine That! **158**

I spread my hand...
Grasp **127**

I stand defeated...
Vanquished **108**

I want to die...
Why? **110**

Idle oars tread no waves...
Row! **169**

If you see a square hole...
Thinkillate! **59**

In all its beaming pride...
Borrowed **132**

In any compromise...
Give And Take **55**

In comfort they reside...
Cohabit **181**

In life you're born a Sisyphus...
Tenured **201**

In only mild exaggeration...
The Master **107**

In solitude open your mind...
Scripture Rapture **133**

In the patterns of time...
Tea Leaves **176**

In these frothing waters...
Eruditorium **164**

Industry is not the nature...
A Law Of Nature **97**

Is bad arithmetic...
Basic Algebra **81**

Is it envy I feel...
Semantics **166**

Is it for name you strive...
Ask Yourself **52**

Is it not the case...
Inflate **49**

Is she a God...
Religion **165**

Is the failure of conviction...
Obligation **151**

It all depends...
But Of Course! **111**

It is a small mind...
Vision **84**

It is in our nature...
Ostrich **85**

It is not everyday...
Wondrous **134**

It was the do-nothing pothole...
Negative Energy **113**

Let not fate tarry on you...
Take Hold **8**

Let the present moment...
Impulsate! **128**

Let us not discourage ourselves...
Set Aside… **163**

Let us pretend that all is...
Appearances **143**

Life needs an essential bargain...
Necessary Vices **10**

Lightning does not explain...
Brilliance **57**

Like a whisper it pervades...
Nameless **30**

Listen carefully...
The Bugle's Lesson **25**

Locked in combat...
Attraction **38**

Logic is brought to its knees...
Limit **105**

Long in the memory reside...
Cherished **118**

Look, a block of words!...
Thoughtlets **39**

Meandering words…
Clarity **32**

Mind the abyss…
There Be Dragons **75**

Must we depart on these…
Conference **37**

Must you recall every detail…
Garnish **190**

Never mourn the loss of a map…
Chart! **9**

No cobweb ever stopped…
Opponent **34**

No completeness in the world…
Quenchless **7**

No one lives by truth…
Kaliyug **145**

Of what import…
Unscattered **160**

Often, if one looks, one finds…
Look! Ye Shall Find… **93**

Oh! To die without understanding…
Epiphany **155**

Oh, the blinding Simplicity…
Janus **17**

On easy sands…
Foundation **71**

Once upon a time…
Dearly Departed **150**

One always colors the truth...
Palette **135**

One cannot become a pundit...
In Lieu Of… **6**

One cannot leave the plough...
Guidance **69**

"One cannot pretend aristocracy"...
Egalitarian **104**

One does not wait upon...
Go-Getter **179**

One wonders if the impossible...
Varnashram **121**

Only a drunkard has a tongue...
Control **36**

People can be uncouth...
Incommensurate **88**

Rail against the style shepherds...
Bleat **142**

Right beneath this shimmering...
Through A Lens, Darkly **15**

Rise above the existence...
i **80**

Roll aside the carpet...
A Dare **122**

Rotten roots...
Seeds **199**

Salvation does not appear...
The Slow Orchard **152**

Seek the voice inside...
Command **60**

She douses the flames...
With Cold Water… **3**

Shed not a tear...
Renewal **130**

Something was said then...
Overlooked **14**

Sorrow is the name of...
Unwanted **40**

Spare not the efforts...
Inebriate Liberally! **180**

Speech discriminates between...
Receiver **20**

Stand still at a pointed precipice...
Imagine In A Dream **153**

Stop peeling the skin...
Work **54**

Such small doors in such tall...
Pusillanimity **19**

Take flight while you still can...
Open Sky **35**

Thank the imperfections...
Esteem **29**

The agony of fulfillment...
Downhill **156**

The baying wolves of vengeance...
Beware Its Ferality **45**

The best defense against sarcasm…
Advice **18**

The blade of grass is insouciant…
Care-Free **53**

The brevity of oxymoronic…
Economy **26**

The essence of man…
Distillation **103**

The ink of victory…
Revision **51**

The little trivialities of life…
Intentions **129**

The memory is a mirror…
Partial Amnesia **141**

The memory of first love…
Secrets **44**

The mirrors carry their own…
A Piece Here, A Piece There **186**

The mortal spirit strives…
Dignity **187**

The mystery of a book…
Allure **140**

The orbs, full of fair spirit…
Drowned… **194**

The pain of seven continents…
Check-Mate **13**

The Past does not forget…
Left Behind **22**

The pen which rebels…
Defy **79**

The shame of the land…
A Footnote In An Ignored Book **185**

The sprinkling of fragrant petals…
Unknowing **47**

The staircase of virtue leads…
Directional **77**

The traveler's tunnel passeth…
For The Pilgrim **157**

The universe is God's long-hand…
Who Asks? **50**

The wine lost the battle…
Contra-Position **195**

There is no accounting…
Accept **78**

Tie as you may…
Blind Justice? **197**

To be blessed, it must feel…
One Wishes… **196**

"To the delight of men moves…
Child-Like **117**

To what avail, this flaying…
Arguments **73**

Trust not the promises…
Fast Bait **12**

Vigilance! The bird must shut…
Barn Door **102**

Was it a lamp twinkling...
Lux **82**

We all hold the Book of Climax...
Denouement **87**

We are all scrambled pieces...
Self-Aware Under A Bodhi Tree **146**

We are slaves to the diktats...
Where There's One.. **21**

We do not mourn the memories...
Residual **11**

We have been written into...
Play It Well **70**

We need no ghosts...
Sadly… **149**

What has one gathered...
Chaff **86**

What manner of pride, that...
False **43**

What regret for that which slips...
Treasures **131**

When heroes make their last...
To Make It Worse… **48**

When the horse is unwilling...
Obviously **159**

When the last light had brushed...
Having Lived And Not Seen… **126**

Where be the loom...
Healer **167**

Where from cometh the rattling? …
Modern Man **98**

Why should one feel deceived…
Still You Do… **119**

With a sigh of relief…
So One Thinks **170**

With sorrow I break my friendship…
Restraints **96**

With what facility should I shed…
Companions **191**

Your conscience is the rough…
Sartorial Thought **46**

The ninth pawn lives on the edge of reality, a mischief of the subconscious. It is a missed opportunity conflated into a regret of unfulfilled life, a minor joy which blossoms into ecstasy, a drop of thought which can unfurl a paradigm, a tiny desire which becomes unquenchable thirst of quest, an irrelevant misunderstanding which becomes a running feud of distress and argument with the world…. The ninth pawn sits at the back of our minds, frequently expressing itself in our actions without our knowledge, not waiting for us to hear it, but always pulsating with the potential to bring us in touch with magic and meaning of life. Herein dwells the wonder and promise of the mind. Come, paint the nuances of this non-existent ninth pawn governing our lives as the invisible hand…

"In good measure and often,
we engage in an argument
over the ninth pawn of white..."

Poetry

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